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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 9 May 2013

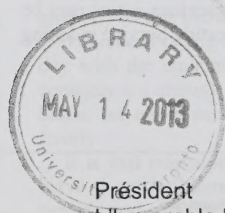
Jeudi 9 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 36 today. I guess this is the first bill introduced in the House by our new agriculture minister, and it's pretty clear she's new to the job, because if Bill 36 is supposed to do anything to improve or facilitate greater local food production and distribution, it fails miserably in its attempt.

I think what I'd like to do, for the Premier's and the minister's education, is read a little bit from a *Globe and Mail* story that was published in January of this year. I'll just read portions of it, because I think it really indicates what is the problem with improving or increasing local food production and distribution.

It starts this way: "Two chicken inspectors showed up at a farm in southern Ontario not long ago. They flashed badges and inspected the premises and, sure enough, they found what they were looking for: chickens. About 100 of them, wandering across open pastures...."

"The inspectors quickly put a stop to ... that. They told the farmer to get rid of his chickens or face the consequences," which are \$10,000 a day.

Then they went around to all the other neighbouring farms with the same badges and the same threats. They were not the police or the RCMP or public health officials. They were employees of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the body that represents Ontario's 1,000 quota-holding chicken farmers, and they have the legal right to inspect the books, records and documents, lands, and premises of anybody who has chickens in our province. You see, quota is a legal requirement for having turkeys, chickens, eggs or cows in Canada and in Ontario, and if

you're not a member of that cartel, then you are often acting illegally and in contravention of the law.

Just to give some context here, in Ontario, you are allowed to own upward of 300 chickens without purchasing quota, if you are registered with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. But if you should want to have more than 300 chickens in Ontario, you have to buy quota, and to get into the business, the minimum allotment for chickens is about 90,000 units or \$1.5 million at current rates. So you cannot be a small producer of chickens or turkeys or anything with feathers in this province unless you pay the \$1.5-million entry fee into the cartel.

The same thing applies with eggs. If you want to be a small egg producer, you are allowed to have up to 100 laying hens, as long as they're registered with the Egg Farmers of Ontario. Heaven forbid if somebody in the province should have an unregistered laying hen. They too are subject to those drastic and onerous fines if the chicken is not registered. The entry level to buy quota for eggs in this province is about 5,000 units or about \$500,000 in costs to the cartel. I could go on; the same thing applies with dairy.

So as the Premier and the new Minister of Agriculture talks about her desire to increase distribution and production of local food in this province, even going so far as creating and proclaiming a new local food awareness week in October of each year, these tremendous, costly impediments and obstacles are there in front of everybody who should choose to want to be a producer of local food.

Speaker, I think it's just hypocrisy to suggest that local food production, distribution and consumption is being facilitated by Bill 36 when these onerous obstacles are still present and not being touched. Once again, \$500,000 to get into the egg business, unless you just want to have 100 hens: I would dare anybody in this Legislature and anybody in this province to make a profitable living with 100 chickens laying eggs. They might make \$15 or \$20 a day with the amount of eggs that 100 chickens can lay, certainly not enough to even pay the property tax on their barns, let alone earn a living for themselves and their family.

It is just ridiculous that this government continues to leave these problems and barriers in place. But it goes beyond and past the cartels and the quotas as well. If anybody cares to look at the regulations that surround moving your local produce—your local food—onto the tables of consumers, you will find an incredible maze of ridiculous, costly barriers called regulations.

Here's one that I think people be might be interested to know. The Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act lists what are appropriate foods that are to be sold at farmers' markets. Of course, fresh meats are not allowed to be sold at farmers' markets, and ungraded eggs are not allowed to be sold at farmers' markets. But the health units do produce an appropriate list of what can be sold at farmers' markets, and they include things such as canned pop, bags of potato chips, Popsicles and chewing gum. That is what this province has listed as appropriate products to be sold at a farmers' market.

0910

I have yet to come across a Popsicle tree, Speaker, and I bet you there's not many people who have come across a Popsicle tree in this province, but it is allowed and appropriate to sell those Popsicles off the Popsicle trees at our farmers' markets. It's the same with chewing gum. I know there are bushes of chewing gum plants all across the province producing multitudes of chewing gum, and they of course are allowed at the farmers' markets as well. But heaven forbid if somebody should want to sell an egg at a farmers' market, or a chicken breast. Then they're in trouble. Then they've got the heavy hand of the law to deal with, just like those farmers in southern Ontario who were doing that vile, atrocious, evil act of having 100 unregistered chickens on their land and facing \$10,000 in fines.

So I do think that if this government is indeed caring and compassionate for small producers, and interested and honestly, genuinely wanting to facilitate the increased production, distribution and consumption of local food, let's start dealing with the real problems, and put your proclamation of food awareness week on the back burner and start dealing with the real problems.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again it's an honour to be able to talk about food in this Legislature, and I have some specific comments to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. He used the word "hypocrisy." Last week, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario were here, and I'm sure all three parties vowed to support supply management. Well, let's talk about hypocrisy. A member of the Tory caucus just stood here and said that the cartels are going to bring farmers down. Dairy farming in Ontario provides 75,000 jobs. Does the Tory caucus supply management or does it not, as the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington said? That's talking out of both side of the caucus's mouth.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, this is a very serious issue. I'm here to stand up for the people in supply management, to stand up for the people who support this province, who create the jobs in this province. And the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington says it's a cartel. Let's come clear with the Tory party. Are you in favour? Is Tim Hudak in favour of supply management, or is he not? Because I have just heard, and I think our caucus has just heard, that this member is not

in favour of supply management because of his ideology. Well, what is the ideology of the Tory party? I think we have the right—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The 75,000 people who work in the dairy industry have the right to know if the Tory party is in favour of supply management, or is it not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I couldn't have said it better than the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. On so many issues does the Tory party wants to have it two ways. They say one thing in their ridings and they say something totally different here. Speaker, as my colleague from just north of my riding has stated, he claims there isn't much in the bill. We think there's lots in the bill. We've debated it here now for 20 hours, and it's time that we vote on the bill and send it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to respond as well. I want to address that directly. I can tell you that I have some of the most successful farm operations throughout my riding, including supply management, which I would support. I would say the question here is on Bill 36. I think it was just completely extemporaneous and quite angry comments from the member from Timiskaming. I know he himself is a proud farmer—a dairy farmer, I believe—and so I have every reason to embrace his passion for the topic. But I'll make it local food.

This is an article from the media last week, not precipitated by any action of mine, but a fellow I know quite well, Ted Eng. He's a farmer and owner of Zephyr Organics and employs a team composed of family, local and migrant workers. He's pictured here showing one of the migrant workers, Peter Bartley from Jamaica, weeding a greenhouse plant operation of leeks. This is a proud farm. This is a fellow, the Eng family, some of the most wonderful property in Uxbridge township. He served on council as a regional councillor. He served on the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee and the GTA agricultural advisory committee. He's active in the community. He's active in leadership in agriculture. These are the things that we should be celebrating.

The anger that the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is upset with is that this bill is much to do about nothing. Bill 36 does nothing. I can tell you, there's more success just from the farms themselves. This is the Evans family farm abuzz—

Hon. John Gerretsen: What about supply management? Are you in favour of that?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly am in favour of supply management. I've been quite clear on that.

I would say that I believe that agriculture is the largest real business in this province. Now, this government could do more to cut down some of the red tape. I fully endorse that. Unnecessary red tape and regulations are hurting farming in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this morning and speak again about food. I'm looking forward to this bill getting into committee. I hope at that point we can put some substance to this bill.

I do want to take a moment in this debate to make a point that I've made before, which is about access to any kind of food in this province. This week is one of these weeks that we talk about it. It's Hunger Awareness Week in Ontario. We have this week, and it hasn't stopped hunger. We have a bill before us that proposes Local Food Week, and I don't actually think that that is going to solve our local food issues in Ontario. But the issue of hunger is something that we should focus on.

We have a budget that was introduced last week. The Attorney General yesterday, in our housing debate, was talking about the Tories' record when it came to cutting social assistance benefits to people. You know, I read in the weekend newspaper about a former minister here who made those cuts, and he kind of expressed that he didn't actually know what he was doing when he did that. He had no understanding of the impacts of that. I thought that was telling. It was clear to people who understood that a 22% cut to somebody making \$550 just won't allow people to eat. But to the Attorney General, where I do disagree is that in fact rates in Ontario are now worse than they were when you came into office, sir. In fact, people are worse off if they don't have work in Ontario than they were when the Liberals came to power. That is something that has not been addressed. In this budget we've seen further cuts. You know, at the end of this year, community start-up benefits will expire. That means that people will not have access to emergency supports when they are in need. So while we're talking about a Local Food Week in Ontario, we're failing to do the very basics to make sure that 600,000-plus people who don't have work actually have support when they need it. I think that is something that we do need to focus on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess I hit something raw with the member from Timiskaming. Maybe we'll have to pasteurize him a little bit here and calm him down. The thrust of my comments is thus: There are real, tangible, significant barriers for local producers to get their product to consumers. If we don't deal with them, all the proclamations and all the awareness weeks in the world will do nothing for those people, both the consumers and the producers. I talk about hypocrisy. This is hypocrisy, that when a bill—

Hon. John Gerretsen: You can't say that in here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw. It's unparliamentary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

0920

Mr. Randy Hillier: But certainly we can see the contradictions between putting forth a bill that says, "The

Liberals have a big, big heart for local food, they are compassionate about the local producer, they want to facilitate and help and make everything possible," but then they run and hide from the real barriers, the real problems.

Nowhere did I hear from anybody—from the Attorney General or the member from Timiskaming—about the Popsicle trees that grow here in Ontario but that are facilitated and allowed by our regulations. Let's deal with the real problems and the cost. The cost of entry into local food is prohibitive. When you have to spend \$500,000 to get into selling eggs—that's the entry fee—that is an impediment.

Let's wake up and really, surely show that you do have a heart and that you do have some care and compassion for consumers and local producers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act, and to celebrate local food and its roots in my riding.

Burlington is a wonderful place to live and is home to great natural beauty: a limestone escarpment threading through woodlands of oak, pine, ash and maple, and a waterfront lapped by the waters of Lake Ontario. Although it is thought of as suburban these days, it was at one time called the garden of Canada, in recognition of its land, thought to be some of the richest, best settled and most highly cultivated in Upper Canada.

Like many settlements at that time, agriculture was a big part of life in early Burlington. While Halton's agriculture is mostly found north of Dundas Street these days, at one point it was far more commonplace and widespread. You'll find a hint of this on Burlington's crest, which features a bright, red apple. The apple is symbolic of the area's fruit-growing industry, which dates back to the days of the United Empire Loyalists.

History records that more than 200 years ago, members of the Ghent and Davis families, early settlers of Burlington, paddled across Burlington Bay in canoes carrying apple saplings brought up from the Carolinas as seeds and raised to whips in the Stoney Creek area. My constituency office is located on a street named for the Ghent family, and orchards once fanned out across fields just a couple of blocks south of my constituency office.

Off to the east, the plots along Maple Avenue were once home to vegetable crops. Market gardens also flourished between downtown Burlington and the village of Aldershot, even further east. If you look closely, you can still see some of the signs of those market gardens in neighbourhoods along Plains Road.

By the late 19th century, local growers were developing a reputation as pioneers of a different sort, dabbling in technology and using cold storage to export perishable fruits, not just across the province, but also overseas. Local growers dedicated themselves to science and knowledge of the land, determining which varieties of fruit were best adapted to the area's soil and climate. Through these efforts, the area's productive fruit acreage

doubled, and they didn't just stop with fruit. The same appetite for discovery and improvement spun off over 250 varieties of hardy and delicious crops being produced.

Between 1892 and 1902, the Burlington Horticultural Society captured first prize at Toronto's Industrial Exhibition for the best collection of fruits. This standing was mirrored far abroad at the Chicago World's Fair in 1896, the Paris and Glasgow exhibitions in 1900, and Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition in 1901.

Agricultural production in Burlington peaked between the great wars, but the land still bears the names of those who made a living as farmers. We remember some in our streets or parks, others in our institutions. You'll find a high school named after M.M. Robinson, the founder of what we now know as the Commonwealth Games. Robinson also founded the Ontario Food Council and served as vice-chairman of the Ontario Food Terminal.

As important as that heritage is, it's equally vital that we not lose sight of the fantastic legacy that is all around us even today, Speaker. I think on some level that's what Bill 36 sets out to do. In a broad-brush sense, it underlines the importance of local food and seeks to foster a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of sourcing where food comes from, how it is grown and sometimes even who is responsible for growing it.

Having spoken about the distant past, I think all of us here feel an enormous sense of gratitude for the convenience granted to us by modern times and technologies. Anyone who grew up during the 1960s and 1970s can probably still remember when shoppers didn't have nearly as many options as are available—and widely available—to the consumers of today. Even then, things were more seasonal.

The act of eating, mechanically speaking, hasn't changed much since the dawn of time. Chewing, swallowing, digesting—you can't really do a lot to change up the routine, Speaker. But as far as what you put on your plate, how you prepare it and how you source the ingredients, all of those factors are now far more variable than they used to be. That's true even if you decide to leave the cooking to someone else. Our chefs and restaurants now work from a palette of options that would have been unimaginable outside the finest kitchens until the last 20 years, Speaker.

That variety is made possible by thoughtful and dedicated farmers, as well as a robust distribution network, but it is sustained by consumers' choice and conscious effort. Today, victory gardens and community agriculture are taking root in my riding thanks to the efforts of BurlingtonGreen, which is helping to improve awareness of people sourcing their food from local suppliers and farmers, and creating and managing a community garden in partnership with the city of Burlington. Consumers' tastes have helped to shape the evolution of farming practices as well, of course, making things like heritage livestock and organic vegetables, biodynamic wines and cheeses much more readily available, if not quite the stuff of corner stores.

Even though it continues to evolve and face new and imposing challenges, the agriculture sector remains a major economic engine in this province. It's impossible to imagine a future without food and farming, and yet in my view we continue to be overly confident when it comes to the critical matter of food security. This is just one reason why legislation to strengthen this sector is so important, Speaker. It gives the government an opportunity to support a critical sector and help to develop local food systems in communities across this province. It is essential that the government seize this opportunity to do real and substantial good. Our food system and agriculture sector face a number of serious challenges, from red tape to hydro bill shocks to crushing eco fees on agricultural tires, so it's curious and more than a little disappointing that the government has failed to address those concerns in this bill, Speaker.

As some have suggested, a critical step to realizing the goals of a stronger food system in this province is improving food literacy, and that's a steeper hill than many realize. Mark Wales, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, has warned about the high cost of school programming that doesn't make time for home economics instruction. We're raising a generation that, for the most part, can't cook a meal from scratch. To local producers and growers in Ontario, that's not a healthy sign, Speaker. Prepared and prepackaged foods certainly have a key role, and I'm proud to salute outstanding and long-standing local businesses like Ippolito Group, Fearnans Pork, Tender Choice and Voortman Cookies, but they're not a substitute for practical knowledge. They're not the whole picture.

Neither is Bill 36 the complete picture, Speaker. Many of those who have spoken before me have detailed the blind spots and shortcomings of the proposed legislation or its missteps such as bigfooting Ontario Agriculture Week with the newly minted Local Food Week. This sector is big and diverse enough to accommodate both, but there's no credible reason they should fall on the same week.

0930

We also know that agriculture and local food organizations have submitted a considerable number of ideas and proposals for this bill, which were ignored by the government. My colleague from Oxford has done exceptional work in a white paper that outlines a number of concrete ways we could strengthen our food system, boost access to local food and help our agriculture sector. But, for some reason, the government has chosen to ignore stakeholders' input and opposition proposals, and simply re-introduced what is essentially the same thin bill that we saw in the House last fall. We've seen this kind of unconscious behaviour from the government before, but, to be frank, we expect better from the Premier.

I know that we can do better than Bill 36 as it stands. While I'm prepared to help this bill get to committee, I hope that the government will take that opportunity to make this bill everything it can be and everything it should be for the good of our farmers and, indeed, for all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is with great joy that I stand this week to talk about the Local Food Act, because last week I left off talking about the Local Food Act with a big concern for people on Manitoulin Island, that there are so many farmers, so many farmers' markets and so many people that count on attracting and welcoming people to Manitoulin Island that that was in danger of happening.

I'm a man of my word. I give credit where credit is due, and I must say I'm very pleased to see my friend across the way, the Minister for Northern Development and Mines, who is here. We worked very hard in order to get this done, and I have to say I'm very happy that he stepped up to the plate and heard the call of the people of Manitoulin Island and has released the funding that is needed in order to get the Chi-Cheemaun running again so that people can welcome them—from the Island—so they can start selling their product.

However, we've hit another barrier. Now it's in order to get the federal government to respond and actually authorize this to happen, because it is a federal jurisdiction. So we need to continue putting pressure on our cousins at the federal level in order to get this done. It would be nice to see some movement on there.

Now back to this bill. What I would like to see, and what a lot of individuals across Algoma-Manitoulin would like to see, is a process where there's going to be a sincere demonstration that their input will actually be considered in this bill. I don't see any steps, or I don't see any concrete formats, in regard to how they're going to have that opportunity. In what arena, in what realm, will they be able to offer their points of view? I'm hoping that once we get this to the committee stage, that we can actually get those nailed down so that they feel—although they're in northern Ontario, and they're smaller than the big players—that they will have a sincere way of bringing their contributions—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from Burlington for her 10 minutes, as well as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his comments.

Speaker, we've had 20-plus hours debate on this issue. The member from Burlington indicates that we can do better with this bill. Perhaps that could be the case. I would ask them to help us put this bill into committee so that we can actually do some work on it instead of standing here and sitting here, and listening to the opposition hear themselves talk. I would recommend that everybody end the debate; send it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate, and I was quite moved by, the comments from the member from Burlington, because she described the pastoral scene of where she's proud to be the member with a sense of passion and knowledge—technically, the way she described the very

foundations of the community that she represents. So I commend you for that, and I feel very strongly myself.

This morning there's been some discussion about supply management here, and clearly on our side. It's the foundational part of agriculture is ensuring we have supply of safe, quality food for Ontario's citizens. Now, this is a family, the Evans family, and the article says the farm is abuzz. Now, let's put this in context. The Evans family—the principal fellows involved here are Grant Evans and his brother, Eldon Evans. They have a sprawling Highview Holsteins Ltd. farm near Epsom, Ontario. I'd encourage people—there's another pastoral scene that you could visit this summer.

Durham region is home to 1,454 farms, and these farmers farm 297,702 acres. Some 42,600 acres are pasture; 32,138 are Christmas trees—horticulture, I guess; and the other 209,000 are acreage crop, what you call cash cropping. Now, the Evans operation alone is just one small business unit in my riding, and this is the story across Ontario. For instance, the York region has 828 farms, with 153,000 acres in use; Halton region has 469 farms, with 79,000 acres in use; and Peel has 440 farms, and they farm 93,000 acres.

Now, the Holsteins at the Evans farm: The farm works 1,800 acres and has 460 cows—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. Once again it's an honour to be able to talk about local food and food in general in Ontario, and to comment on the member from Burlington. As opposed to the last speech from the Conservative side, I agree with almost everything she said. It is obviously a split party, because there are some reasonable and some totally unreasonable. You know, I would like a confirmation from the leader of the Tories regarding supply management, because obviously what we heard this morning was completely, completely anti-supply management.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, he should make it again, because his caucus, some of them, are making statements that are way out there.

As for the Local Food Act, the problems with the Local Food Act—good, nice statements, but they reflect a lot of the problems in the Liberal government, because it sets lofty goals, with no framework how to achieve those goals. Actually, it doesn't even say what the goals are. In the budget, it allocates \$30 million—I believe it's \$30 million—over three years, but if you look at the Local Food Act, it says, "We're only going to tell you how we're going to spend the money three years from now." Obviously, that's a problem, and it's obvious why we have to, in this Legislature, implement measures that hold the government accountable while it's spending money. It's great to look at the scandals after they're done, but then the money's already gone. The Local Food Act is a small example, but it is an example of, "We're going to take \$30 million and talk about what we did with it three years from now," and that's wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies. The member for Burlington, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. I always like to hear you speak. You're a very good speaker and very articulate and passionate, but your Uncle Ernie, the member from Oxford, said that our leader, Tim Hudak, has said it numerous times. So I'm just going to clear that up before I start.

As I said earlier, this legislation, as it stands, is abundantly flawed. There is, and it has been said repeatedly, no need to pit Ontario Agriculture Week against Local Food Week. But as it turns out, that misstep actually spotlights a bigger problem with this legislation, which is that it tends to miss the obvious. In doing so, it misses out on doing the most good for a sector facing many challenges.

Again, stakeholders across the agriculture and food sectors have a lot of good ideas about how this legislation could be made better. This party, and in particular its agriculture critic, have put forward a host of proposals for strengthening our food system, increasing access to local food and helping our agriculture sector. Our food system and agriculture sector face a number of serious challenges, from red tape to hydro bills and shocking to crushing eco fees on agricultural tires, so it's curious and more than a little disappointing that this government has failed to address these concerns in this bill.

0940

At the end of the day, the government has essentially chosen to ignore stakeholders' input and opposition proposals and to introduce a piece of legislation that is essentially identical to what we saw here in the House last fall. This government owes it to the people of this province to take the opportunity presented by committee and make the most of it. Let's roll up your sleeves, get under the hood and fix this legislation, or it will stall out before it can do the job you intended it to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up today and give my two cents' worth on Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act.

I'd like to start out saying that we should all thank a farmer for what they do for our province and what they do for our economy. Especially the government of today should be thanking a farmer because if it wasn't for the success of the farmer in our society, the only industry that's really churning along, this province would be down the sewer without them. So we've got to thank the farmer for keeping our economy going.

Mr. Speaker, just to expand upon the economic strength of the economy due to agriculture, let's look at what they've done to the manufacturing sectors. St. Thomas, in my riding, has a population of 37,000 people.

Since 2006, our city has lost 6,000 manufacturing jobs. Take a look; that's almost 20% of the population, if you think about that. It's ranging from small to larger-size jobs. Schulman lost 134 jobs; Accuwright millwork lost seven; Alcoa, 152; Arvin Meritor, 30; Conmet, 10; Con-trend, 157; Emerson Network Power, 195; Flexalloy, 10; Ford Motor Co., 2,387; Lear St. Thomas, 303; L.A. Walker Transport, 256; Mutt and Co., two; Parker Hannifin, three; Potters Canada Partnership, 20; Rite-Form Tool and Die, 11; Sterling Truck, 2,200; Thermo-disk, 373; Woolsoly, 31; and ZF Linkstar, 94. And to top it off, at the end of this month, Timken, which has been part of our city since the 1940s, will be shutting down, and another 300 jobs lost.

The only thing that's really keeping our economy going in our area is the fact that we have good land and we have smart, educated farmers who are producing product in order to spend in our economy.

I think this government brought out this bill—what they should be doing is helping the economic situation of the farmer. We put through plenty of ideas in Paths to Prosperity. I would have hoped that this bill would have encompassed some of them. Trying to reduce some red tape and regulation for these farmers: The easiest way to do that is to follow Ernie Hardeman's idea, the member from Oxford. Have one window of access for these poor farmers who want to do something with their land or build a new barn or do something interesting with their business. Let them go to just one part of the government instead of having to go through many different ministries. Let's work with them. That alone would really, really ease their pain in dealing with government.

We need to get a hold of our hydro rates, the amount of hydro that our farmers are using on the dairy farms, the pig farms, the chicken farms. Let's try to work with those costs so that they aren't struggling, so that when they want to pass the farm onto their children, the high expense and the cost of the land to buy the farm, the kids will want to come back and take over the farm. Instead, they're now having trouble, with the high energy costs, to actually pass on the farm because of the high costs associated with it.

One thing that they could do for agriculture is they could have stopped the destruction of the horse racing industry, the slots at racetracks. And I do have to say to my friends to the left here that the time to do it would be to not support this budget. This is the last chance for the horse racing industry, but if you want to sell your soul for a 15% cut in auto insurance over the horse racing industry, I think—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I will withdraw.

The other thing that they should be doing is have a dedicated fund for risk management. That's another one that's come out from our Paths to Prosperity. Instead of having a general fund that other government agencies can take from, let's have that fund set aside so that when the

farmers do need it, when we actually have a bad crop year, it's there for them to keep on going. The poor apple farmers last year: A lot of them have suffered and gone without due to the fact that a lot of that money isn't there for them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to touch upon this food act. We're going to bring forth an amendment the members from Nepean—Carleton and Oxford have put forth to add food literacy for our students in our schools. I think that it's very important to add it to our education. It has been identified that only 41% of people age 18 to 34 actually know where food comes from. I think that's startling because how can you expect to cook healthy food? How do you expect to support local food if you don't understand where it comes from and understand how it helps the economy and helps provide the services like health care and education that we have today? So we need to add that food literacy.

While we're adding that food literacy in our education program, I think we also need to look at adding some financial literacy for our students. There are too many kids today who are graduating already in debt and aren't able to manage that debt, let alone they get married and buy a house; they're in over their heads. If we can get some financial literacy into the school system, they'll be far better ahead at the end of the day, when they start out their life, when they start their new job, get their new family, and able to plan for proper retirement. Because I tell you, the way this government is headed, we're in trouble. We're in trouble, and we need people to be educated. We need them to understand what they need to do with their money. We also need them to understand where their food comes from. If we can help put that into our education system, make it a priority, I think we can make a better Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this Saturday our local farmers' market opens up, the Horton market, and it's in St. Thomas. All the farmers—there will be a nice big breakfast today. We make it, in our family, kind of a tradition to go every Saturday morning to get our vegetables and fruits for the week. There's a bakery there; we get some bakery. There's a butcher; we get my daughter her meat for her sandwiches for school for the week there, usually on Saturday.

So it will be very nice to see all the vendors out there. I tell you, it draws from a wide range. We usually show up, and the president of OFA, Mark Wales, usually has a booth there with his garlic and his peppers that he grows. And then we'll go down to McSmith's Organic Farm. Excellent. We always get her cabbage that she's chopped up and, of course, her lettuce. It's really enjoyable to see them.

It becomes a family atmosphere, these farmers' markets. The kids can get their face painted, they can get a balloon, and then around the corner there will be the crafts.

The gentleman who paints my house, Chuck Magri—his wife grows herbs, and she sells her teas there. Then we'll go inside, and of course, the bakery will be there.

We'll buy the cookies. We'll buy a breakfast sandwich. I won't too often because I eat too much while I'm here, so I cut back and just have a coffee. At the end, of course, as I said, the butcher—and the turkey shop. There's a turkey farmer, Oegema farms. We always get the little bacon-wrapped turkey—I don't know what you call it, but I call it bacon-wrapped turkey—and the little turkey pepperettes.

All that is local. It's packed with people, and we support the local farmers who come and sell their wares. What we need to do is expand upon that. Let's try to encourage southwest Ontario to have more of producers in the area.

I think a great idea from the member from Oxford is maybe producing a second food terminal. I think a second food terminal would be in an excellent position to come to my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London. It's halfway between Windsor, Toronto and Buffalo. As I said earlier, we've been devastated by job loss. I think it would be an excellent idea if this government brought that idea forward. We're more than welcome to bring that food processing. If we can generate more food processing, our farmers can grow more food. Our farmers can sell more food. It can create jobs, and it will have a beneficial trickle-down effect throughout the economy.

So as I stated before, we thank the farmers. We thank them for what they do. We hope to teach our kids to understand where food comes from, and we hope this government acknowledges the fact that this is the only industry that is working in this province, that is bringing in—that is keeping this province afloat, and we need to support them.

The Local Food Act needs a lot of amendments to it, and we're going to put those forward when this bill passes. We just need to ensure that our farmers stay strong. For Elgin—Middlesex—London, it's a key component to our economy, and for southwest Ontario, ditto.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. He had a lot to say which was commendable, but there were a couple of points that I think need to be emphasized here.

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First of all, he said rightly that this bill requires a number of amendments. I am in total agreement with him. But the amendments cannot be made here in this Legislature during second reading. The amendments have to be made in committee, and many of us want this bill to go to committee so that those good amendments that he says he has can be heard, can be debated and can be implemented.

He talked about the NDP members selling their souls, and I'm not sure whether that's still on the record, but he was asked to withdraw it. But we think that the process in a minority government and in this Legislature, and even in a majority government, should always be one of consultation, of negotiation between the parties and the party leaders and the party House leaders, and that the proposal

of new ideas is what is going to move Ontario forward. That's what we're trying to do around the budget process, that's what we're trying to do around this bill, versus what I would suggest at this point has become little more than a filibuster on a bill that every single member of this Legislature agrees with and that every single member of this Legislature knows has to be amended in committee. I would hope this is the last speaker. It was a good speech. Please, just let us get on with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London sometimes never ceases to amaze me. To say that agriculture is the only sector of the economy that is actually growing jobs is so patently absurd, and it's an insult to businesses across this province.

Mr. Speaker, 4.4% of small businesses right now in this province are generating about 50% of jobs. That is 400,000 jobs. We as a government—and this is also true in the agricultural sector—have doubled our university education places, because 70% or 80% of jobs being created in Ontario now require university education.

Some of those small businesses are in the agricultural centre, people like Lloyd Wicks up in Haliburton right now, who is trying to turn his goat farm into a place to produce a lactose goat milk for babies. Why can't he do that, Mr. Speaker? Because the federal government's health regulations won't allow him to do the research and won't give him the certification to get the research. So we have more bureaucracy.

My dear friend Lloyd Wicks has to compete with goat's milk made in China, which has to go through no inspections, no research. He can't get the permission in this country to do that. What happens if the goat's milk from China is tainted? The only safety regulation is that you can call Health Canada and complain. But my friend Lloyd Wicks, who runs a clean operation, has to do that. We want to bring that innovation economy to rural Ontario in a bigger way.

But I find it insulting. My family had a dairy farm in Glengarry and I, as a member in an urban area, get really intolerant of some of the ignorance about farming, but when I have people from rural Ontario trash our small business sector and don't realize that we have the highest growth in clean technology, information technology—the XLV lab, started by two students, didn't exist five years ago and now has 1,000 employees in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I love farmers, but let's not play the game against city folks; some of us are doing a lot for this economy as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London on putting forward a number of great ideas, including some from our recently released white paper on respect for agriculture. In this paper, we look at ideas to solve the challenges that our agriculture industry is facing, and we commit to those parts that are working, like supply management. Ob-

viously, there was some debate earlier in this meeting about the issue of supply management. I know that this is something that the PC Party has consistently supported. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been a strong champion of supply management—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Attorney General, come to order, please.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —agriculture round tables across Ontario, like the one in Grey—Bruce, committing to it in our last platform and included in our white paper.

I also want to just quickly commend the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London for his going through the white paper but also recognizing one of the great concerns that the agriculture community had, which was to put more food literacy training in our educational system, and that's why we are hoping to be putting forward, when we can get this bill to committee, a motion to include food literacy in the classroom, through the Education Act, into the curriculum, so that students will learn more about where food comes from and what it means and what types of foods one should eat. I think it's very important that we put that into legislation, to make sure that it's being done and it doesn't get left behind as an optional as opposed to a mandatory topic that must be taught to all children.

I think that's why our education critic mentioned it in her remarks last week or the week before, that that's what we were hoping to do collectively as agriculture critic and as education critic, to make sure that we provided a type of education for our students in the curriculum that would help them become healthier in what they eat and also in how they grow up. Obviously, the better you eat, the better you'll grow up. Obviously, our pages know that and, obviously, they've done a very successful job of it so far.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, I'm pleased to get up and talk to the Local Food Act. I want to commend the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. He did bring up a few good points, and I'm really appreciative that he kept them local to his area, which is productive in here. If we're going to just repeat some of our bullet notes, it's really not useful. So I was listening to your comments, and I really appreciate it.

However, you did touch on a couple of points. You said something about adding food literacy and financial literacy. I would encourage you to talk to your caucus members and also look at budget literacy, because you need to read the budget before you make a decision, because you don't know what's in it before you can actually bring that benefit back to your constituents back home. Yes, we're in trouble. We're in even greater trouble if you're not going to take the time to review, negotiate, think and talk on behalf of your constituents in order to implement the changes that you need.

I want to introduce you to a little piece of red tape that we have in another region of Algoma—Manitoulin, which

is along the North Shore. I want to introduce this House to a passionate gentleman. His name is Dale Wedgwood. He's an individual who has taken upon himself the passion, the anger and the frustration of farmers in that area in order to address what I'll refer to as red tape—along with the mayor of Huron Shores, Mr. Gil Reeves. They have taken it upon themselves to propel and bring the frustrations of farmers because they cannot constructively farm their lands. They're not fighting with bureaucrats. They're not fighting red tape. They're fighting with elk, and it's destroying their livelihood. We're talking about 15,000 to 30,000 to 50,000 a month.

I have no problem with elk and—you know what?—neither do these farmers. But they do have a concern that they cannot properly farm. When they're chasing elk and they're being told they cannot protect their livelihood, it is very difficult for a farmer to make a living.

So I would really expect that my biggest concern in this is that there is a sincere opportunity for all farmers on the North Shore, on Manitoulin Island, across Algoma-Manitoulin and across Ontario to really have an opportunity to give their views as to how we can improve this act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank those who offered their thoughts on my debate: the member from Beaches-East York, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, the member from Oxford and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

I have to start out just by saying I'm glad I had the opportunity to speak on this bill. It's what I was elected to do. I consulted with my area farmers and other constituents who aren't farmers, on this bill. I've had conversations on it, and I wanted to bring forth their thoughts and our party's thoughts to this floor. For any member to say that I shouldn't speak, and to get this to committee, I think that's wrong. I don't agree with that. We're here to represent our constituents. That's what I was doing, and I will continue to do so. I will never cede the floor to pass something and rush it through without having the opportunity to bring forth the thoughts of my constituents, because I think it's very, very important.

I also think we need to keep our discussion focused on the province of Ontario. It is up to the government to deal with the federal government, but to always blame them for any inadequacy of the province, I think, is not helpful in any discussion.

With regard to this bill, we need to keep the discussion going, ensure we get all the ideas out, so when it does go to committee, they have our thoughts in front of them, so when they bring members to bring their thoughts forward to speak at committee, we can make the appropriate recommendations and changes to this bill.

I look forward to more discussion on this bill. I think it's very important that each member gets the opportunity, if they so choose, to speak, to bring forth their ideas. It's up to the member themselves; it's not up to other parties to say, "Stop speaking." That's dead wrong. That's not democratic.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013. Let me begin by just summarizing a bit of what the bill does. It enacts a food week; the week before Thanksgiving Day is proclaimed Local Food Week. I would say at the onset, I hope this doesn't take away from Agriculture Week. I remember our past PC member Bert Johnson was very proud of bringing about Agriculture Week, and Local Food Week and Agriculture Week are very different.

The bill also allows—the Minister of Agriculture "may ... establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." "The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide ... information in order to assist..." The only thing the minister must do is prepare a report about local food activity at least every three years. That's basically all the bill does, which is not that much, Mr. Speaker.

But it does give me an opportunity to talk about some of the local agriculture and local food initiatives in Parry Sound-Muskoka of which I am very proud. People may not think of Parry Sound-Muskoka as being a big farming area, a big agriculture area, but there is certainly a strong history of agriculture in Parry Sound-Muskoka, and that's demonstrated every fall. I think I have some 14 fall fairs, of which I try to attend just about all of them, and they're a great opportunity for people visiting the area to sort of have more of a connection to rural roots and see where food comes from and learn a bit about it as well.

But we have some initiatives promoting local food. There's Savour Muskoka, which is an organization that is really trying to promote local food. I had the opportunity to go to Brooklands Farm, which is located in Milford Bay. It's owned by Ken and Katya Riley; they've had a farm for a long time there. They're really involved in all kinds of initiatives. I was there in the peak of maple syrup season, because they do produce maple syrup there. They also grow berries; you can pick your own berries. They grow asparagus, and they grow many other different products there. They supply a lot of the local restaurants as well from Brooklands Farms.

Some of our agriculture businesses are not maybe that traditional or common everywhere, partly because our landscape. So we have Johnston's Cranberry Marsh—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members to my right to keep it a little quiet?

Mr. Norm Miller: —which is located in Bala, which of course is the cranberry capital of Canada. I would encourage all people, if they haven't gone to it, to make sure they visit the Bala Cranberry Festival, which is always the weekend right after Thanksgiving. Shortly after Local Food Week, should this bill pass, you can have the opportunity to visit Bala and tour Johnston's Cranberry Marsh and the other cranberry marshes in the area.

Murray Johnston and Wendy Hogarth have Johnston's Cranberry Marsh, and they've started a new business. Things were tough a few years ago, so they got into making cranberry wine as well. They now have Muskoka Lakes Winery, and that's been a popular addition to it as well.

We also have some retail businesses that are promoting local foods. I think in particular of Muskoka Meats, which is located on Highway 11 just south of Gravenhurst. David Purdon operates it, and it's a 100-mile store, so everything within the store has to come from within 100 miles of Muskoka Meats. I would certainly recommend stopping to visit that as well if you're driving up Highway 11 just south of Gravenhurst.

Other local agricultural businesses: We have Milford Bay Trout Farm, which is run by Ralph and Wendy Uhde. They not only grow, I think it's rainbow trout there, but they also produce some very delicious smoked trout from their family recipe, and trout pâté, which if you haven't tried it, you absolutely should try it. I'd recommend it. Again, you can visit the farm, but also there are local retailers that sell it. I have seen it for sale even as far away as Toronto, so you can get it in a few places in Toronto, the Milford Bay trout, as well.

But other businesses you may not think about that are members of Savour Muskoka, like Riverglens Farms in Port Sydney: Dave and Meredith Hiscox. There are producers of a lot of different fine products, like Yummies in a Jar's Lynn Murden.

Of course, we have a new industry starting in Parry Sound—Muskoka that is food-related, and that is breweries that we have coming up. We now actually have three different breweries in Parry Sound—Muskoka, the first being Muskoka Brewery, I believe it was. I'm pleased to see that they've just won some awards at the 2013 Ontario Brewing Awards in April of this year. Muskoka Cream Ale, which is one of my favourite beers, has won the gold medal in the British pale ale category, Summer Weiss won the gold medal in German-style wheat beer, Mad Tom IPA won the bronze award in North American IPA, and Muskoka Craft Lager won a silver award in North American lager. They're doing a great job. They've just expanded. I know last year, their expansion—they are producing 90% more than they were.

Lake of Bays Brewing Company, located in Baysville, is also doing a great job and produces some fine beers; they're also my favourites.

The newest brewery is Highlander, which is located in South River, in east Parry Sound. That was started by Brian Wilson; now he has a partner, Dwayne Wanner. They were down here at Queen's Park recently for the competition that happens annually, the Speaker's competition where the best beers are picked. I'm happy to say that their Scottish Ale was selected as one of the winners here at Queen's Park.

So there is a lot of activity going on in Parry Sound—Muskoka, but there are also some significant impediments that the government should be dealing with, that

are within the provincial purview, in terms of making more food accessible.

The first point I'd like to make is abattoirs. There are so many rules nowadays to do with abattoirs, particularly—I think they're designed for the great, big factory-sized abattoirs, but we have very small abattoirs in Parry Sound—Muskoka. We have Sprucedale Quality Meats and we have Northern Meat Packers—just outside the riding in Trout Creek, but they serve the riding. I know I've talked to the owners of Sprucedale Quality Meats, and they've complained about how onerous the rules are. You don't hear about the small abattoirs having problems; it's usually the large meat packers. I think we need a little flexibility with those small producers, because the problem is, we've had fewer and fewer abattoirs. More of them are going out of business around the province, mainly because of the rules the government comes up with. The result is that farmers—beef producers and other producers—don't have a place to take their products to get them packaged and slaughtered. That's a real challenge, and we've seen fewer and fewer abattoirs.

I know at Sprucedale Quality Meats, in talking to the owner, he also complained about the reliability of electricity. He actually can't operate in the summer because he can't depend on the electricity; if it goes off, it means he has to throw everything out.

We've also seen in recent years in our riding the closure of the only sales yard that I'm aware of. That closed in 2012. There's an article here written by Rob Learn that was on NorthBayNipissing.com from April 2012; his dad, Gord Learn, was the president of the board of directors for many, many years. This was a local sales yard that would operate a couple of days a year, and it provided the opportunity for local farmers to bring their cattle in and not have to drive hours and hours and hours.

Now that that's closed—and I remember that it closed partly because they had a huge property tax bill; the sales barn would operate two or three days in a year and they had a huge property tax bill they just couldn't support. That was kind of the final nail that shut them down, so now I believe the closest sales yard they have is three hours away in New Liskeard. When you look at the posting here in response to this article, it's one farmer saying that he wasn't actually aware of this sales yard being there, but he said he's no longer farming because it was costing more than the animals were worth driving up to New Liskeard, this three-hour drive. If you don't have a local place to sell your cattle, you can't have local beef.

There are things the government could do that would be a lot more substantive than simply proclaiming a Local Food Week. So I would like to see them address those issues, the rules and regulations of abattoirs and making it easier for people to sell their products locally. Also, I would like to make sure that as this new week is created, Bert Johnson's Ontario Agriculture Week doesn't get lost, because they are two different things: local food versus the whole agricultural industry.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is a great privilege to introduce Laura Degraw to Queen's Park today. Laura is from my hometown of Newbury, Ontario, and she's at Queen's Park today with the College Student Alliance. Welcome, Laura.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I wanted to welcome Laura Degraw as well, a student at Cambrian College in Sudbury. We're happy that she's here today, along with Curtis Bell and Mike Bleskie. These are three very, very positive advocates for the College Student Alliance. Good luck, and have a great day today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a great honour to introduce a very special couple from Wingham, Ontario: Dave and Doris Inglis. Welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce my niece's husband, Kent Hadfield. Kent is involved in banking.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Page captain Simon Osak's family is here today, and I'm delighted to introduce them. We've got Mitchell, who is the father; Dr. Roberta, who is the mother; Summer, the sister; Bernice, the grandmother; Brenda Cunningham from New Zealand, who is an aunt; Vanessa Torres, who is a friend; and Elyssa Torres, who is a friend who recently arrived from the Philippines. The Osak family.

Hon. Mario Sergio: These students are winners of a citizenship and responsibility award and are visiting the Legislature to celebrate their success. The students are from Shoreham Public School—15 students in grades 5 and 8, with their teachers Ms. Ibrahim and Mr. Dominicos. Welcome to Queen's Park. They are in the gallery.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Joyce Zhu, the mother of page captain Kelly Ge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome back Paul Tye, who used to sit at the desk back there when he was working for the government House leader. He's now living and working in Calgary. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce three talented young women who have started as interns in my office at the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. They are Dagny Pawlak, Alexandra McKeen and Alison Duffy. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I have several questions for you today regarding Liberal priorities. As critic for health and long-term care,

I get letters from Ontarians across the province who are not getting the health care they need.

Janice from Chatham writes me that she was scheduled for a knee replacement in 2012. Due to funding cuts, her surgery was delayed until 2013, and now, because funding for orthopedics has run out altogether, she now won't have her surgery until 2014.

Forgive me, Premier, but I have trouble understanding your government's priorities. When it comes to Liberal seats, you have billions of dollars to spend; when it comes to Ontarians, you're out of money. The NDP may have to solicit advice on how to hold you responsible, but we think that this is just plain wrong.

Premier, on the basis of this, with priorities like this, do you think that you've earned the right to govern?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me talk just a little bit about what our budget would do in the area of health care if it were to pass. It would increase investment in home and community care by an additional 1% annually: \$260 million this year and an increase of more than \$700 million by 2015-16. That's the priority. It is our priority that people get the care that they need in their home and in the community. We're going to focus on new investments providing care in community to reduce those home care wait times, because not only do we want patients, people, to get care in their homes, we want them to get it in a timely way. We're going to invest in community health links that will promote collaboration in patient care so that patients have one unified care plan. Those are priorities that I think will make the health care system in Ontario stronger. I think it's a priority that the member opposite should support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, the Premier talks about spending more money in health care but what I'm hearing from people across the province is that it's death by a thousand cuts in health care. It's getting worse. It's not getting better.

Here's an excerpt from another letter I've received: "My husband is battling a deadly brain tumour, and we as a family have struggled for almost two and a half years...."

"A medication approved by Health Canada in March of 2010 for treatment is not provincially funded under the Ontario Drug Benefit program, but is available in the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba."

Dana from Belle River, Ontario, has difficulty understanding why she has to cash in her life savings in order to provide her husband with the medication he needs. Premier, I also have trouble understanding, when your government clearly has billions on hand to save Liberal seats, why you can't spend money to save this woman's husband's life.

So, Premier, I'll ask you again: Do you think that your government, which prioritized saving a few seats over saving the lives of Ontarians, has earned the right to govern?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that it is obviously our highest priority that we provide the best care possible for all the individuals that the member

opposite has named and for all Ontarians. That is the focus of the health care system. The reality is that we are in the process of transforming that system. It's very interesting to me that a member of a party that has said, "Government has to change. Implement the recommendations of the report that Don Drummond wrote. Change government so that it works better"—the moment we try to do that, when we actually transform the area of the largest expenditure in government, which is health care, and that means change in the delivery of services, that party stands up and says, "Well, we don't want that kind of change; we don't want change that's going to make the health care system more effective and more efficient." It really is a contradiction in terms. I hope that the member opposite will reconsider and support our changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The only real change we're seeing is continued cutbacks in health care and no accountability for the money that's being spent. Like many Ontarians, I have difficulty understanding how your government can continue to underfund orthopaedic surgery, drag your heels on approving life-saving drugs and cut physiotherapy services for seniors by \$44 million, but it's got \$1 billion on hand to cancel gas plants.

Premier, we're not the NDP; we think these priorities are wrong whether you set up a financial accountability office or not. Do you think it's right when your government prioritizes the Liberal Party over the life-saving needs of the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I think is not right is to mischaracterize changes that are being made in order to deliver service in a better way, in a more timely way. I'll just use one example: the physiotherapy issue. We are changing the way physiotherapy will be delivered in the province. That will mean that more seniors will get access to those services because the model that was in place was not working. It does mean that there's a change, and there is always some disruption when there's a change, but we will continue to invest in services that will improve health care for people.

No matter how many times the member opposite talks about cuts, the only party in this House that would slash public services, that would cut across the top and change services irrevocably in this province, is the Conservative Party.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Between the member from Nepean—Carleton and me, we asked you 32 times when you knew the tab for Oakville was more than \$40 million and the bill for Mississauga

was more than \$190 million. Sadly, we don't have that answer. I use those numbers because you and others have repeated them in the Legislature over and over, but neither you nor the former Premier would answer that one burning question: when? Premier, is the reason you won't tell us when you knew the costs were higher than you reported because that would prove you and your entire cabinet would be held in contempt in this House?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess this is the 33rd time that I'm answering this question, Mr. Speaker, and I have said repeatedly that every time I used a number, it was a number that had been given to me, through the Ministry of Energy, from the OPA, and it was the number that I understood to be the reality.

I answered these questions at committee. I have taken responsibility for improving the process going forward in the planning of large energy infrastructure projects. That is what we need to do going forward. I have opened up this process. I wrote to the Auditor General; I asked him to look at the Oakville situation. I worked to broaden the mandate of the committee so that all questions and all documents could be requested. We have worked very hard to make this an open and transparent process so that all the questions of the opposition and the people of Ontario could be answered. The process did not work. It should have been better, and it is my responsibility to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, we still don't know when she knew the numbers were higher. Here's what former energy minister Chris Bentley had to say about the hundreds of millions already spent in Oakville: "Over the coming days and weeks you will read and hear lots of numbers related to the cost of the plant relocation. The only accurate cost to taxpayers for this relocation is \$40 million." Again on Oakville, your current energy minister said that "it ends up with a net cost of \$40 million...." But, Speaker, the energy experts are telling us it's at least \$310 million.

Premier, you knew the number you were using is wrong. You can't be trusted to govern. Will you support our motion to call a non-confidence vote in the House on your scandal-seized Liberal government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member is aware that the Premier has personally asked the Auditor General, an officer of the Legislature, to look into the matter of the costing for Oakville.

But you know what I find very curious, Mr. Speaker? He's talking about questions that have not been answered. Let me put a few on the table that we're still awaiting the Progressive Conservative Party to answer: Why did they oppose the Mississauga gas plant in the last election, why did they campaign so aggressively, and what was their costing? I do not believe those are overly

complicated questions, yet when we ask Conservative candidates to come before committee, they refuse. When we ask the Leader of the Opposition, it takes weeks and weeks and weeks for him to show up. Someone pointed out to me that the Leader of the Opposition seems to be able to find lots of time to go on CP24 and talk about gas plants, but he won't appear in front of the committee and answer those simple questions. So maybe the member from Nipissing will, in his supplementary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Listen to what former finance minister Dwight Duncan had to say in the estimates committee about the, at that time, \$180-million Mississauga cancellation.

He was asked, "What about any penalties?"

He answered, "not that we're aware of."

Question: "So you're not expecting anything else ... over the," at that time, "\$180 million on Mississauga... any additional claims on penalties?"

Answer: "No. The \$180 million should cover all of that."

Now, of course, his answer grew to \$190 million a week later, and we know now from the auditor that at the time they were swearing that in the estimates committee, the auditor told us they had already paid \$245 million.

Premier, you know the costs were more than \$190 million. I'll ask you again: Will you support the motion to bring a non-confidence vote on your failed leadership?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member wants some quotes: "The only party that will stop the Sherway power plant is the Ontario PC Party. On October 6, vote Ontario PC," Mary Anne DeMonte-Whelan.

And you know what was interesting, Mr. Speaker? We asked her to come to committee, she agreed to come to committee and, surprisingly, at the last minute, she cancelled. We asked the Leader of the Opposition to come. I understand now he may be there on the 14th. It's taken week after week after week. He finds time to go on CP24; he doesn't find time to go to the committee.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about Geoff Janoscik. Here are some of his quotes: "Only Conservative leader Tim Hudak will cancel the Eastern Power gas plant slated to be built on Loreland Ave." We asked him repeatedly to come to the committee. He told the Clerk to stop calling him. That's PC transparency—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. New Democrats have been very clear that we needed to see a balanced approach to balancing the budget, and we insisted on seeing real guarantees of results for people.

People are telling us that they doubt the government will keep its promises because the government won't define how long people are going to have to wait for

home care for their loved ones or the government won't define how long drivers will have to wait to get a break on their auto insurance. They've seen decisions made behind closed doors by this government, and they feel like they almost always come out on the losing end.

Does the Premier agree that we can do a better job of showing Ontarians their government can be accountable and transparent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party yesterday, I guess, put forward an interesting idea, but I really believe that it would be useful for me to be able to have a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the third party—I've been trying to get that in place for a number of weeks—and have a conversation about exactly the other issues that she wants to raise.

We have put in place a number of accountability measures since we came into office, and we can go through a list of them: the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act in 2010, which put in new rules and higher accountability standards; it banned the practice of hiring lobbyists and increased accountability for hospitals and LHINs. We put in the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, which put in a new framework for the conduct of fiscal policy.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got accountability measures in place—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Ontarians and even the members of this caucus want to trust this government, but after all of the waste in eHealth, in Ornge, the gas plants and the ongoing attempts to hide the cost from Ontarians, no one over there should be surprised that many people are very skeptical.

New Democrats put forward a simple, positive and practical idea that would start to build trust: a financial accountability office that would create some real accountability and transparency. Is this an idea the Premier's ready to consider?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said it's an interesting idea. I had a number of conversations with the leader of the third party before we introduced the budget.

We talked with hundreds of thousands of people across the province in developing the budget. We went to great lengths to make sure that we wrote a budget that reflected the concerns that we had heard and reflected issues that are of common interest to us all. That's what the budget document is.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have another conversation with the leader of the third party about another idea. The question is, will there be another idea and another idea and another idea? We've gone through a long process, and you know that I am not averse to conversation, but there is a time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —for decisions. The time is now to make a decision on getting the budget passed

and doing the work of the people of Ontario. That's what the timing is now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Our priority over here should always be the people of this province, and we're not going to stop listening to what they have to say, whether it's today or tomorrow or the next day.

Canada's first federal budget officer told reporters yesterday that a financial accountability office for Ontario makes a lot of sense, and I quote him: "We're spending taxpayer money. I don't think anybody should be left in the dark."

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One Ontario resident named Marilyn from North Bay says, "I am not happy with what the Liberals have done with eHealth, the power plants or Ornge, and find the payouts to CEOs to be obscene. There needs to be independent oversight."

Is the Premier ready to take some prudent, affordable steps to address the concerns of people like Marilyn?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are a number of prudent steps in the budget that address concerns of people in the province, people who are worried about their son or daughter not being able to find a job. We have put in place a youth strategy—we would like to put in place a youth strategy, if the budget can pass. People who are concerned about getting home care for their children, municipal leaders who are concerned about having money for infrastructure, for roads and bridges—all of those concerns are reflected in the initiatives that we have put in the budget and that we talked about with the members opposite before we wrote that budget.

I have said that the idea that the leader of the third party has put forward is not a bad idea. It's an interesting idea. It's something that we can talk about. But we need to know how long the ideas are going to flow. How many days are we going to hear an idea a day? And then, what is the decision-making process? I'd like to have a face-to-face meeting. I look forward to that opportunity in the near future.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday at the public accounts committee, we heard more testimony about public health care dollars being diverted to private businesses and to creative accounting practices at Ornge. Does this Premier admit that there was a serious failure of oversight and transparency at that organization?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've said long ago that it's clear that the past leadership at Ornge let Ontarians down. It was our government that called in the forensic investigators. The results of the review have now been handed over to the OPP to assist with their investigation. Yesterday's testimony at committee reinforced the decision that our government made to bring in new leadership

and enact measures to increase transparency and accountability. So we absolutely agree that there was a failure of leadership in the Ornge situation.

Patient safety is our number one priority. That's why we've introduced legislation that would increase oversight. That legislation is at committee, and we'd like to see the air ambulance act go ahead. I hope that the party opposite will work with us on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In tough times, people want to see their scarce and precious health care dollars invested into front-line services, yet the scandal at Ornge shows very clearly that those public health care dollars were spent on CEO salaries, to build private businesses, and even to purchase ski boats.

The government has insisted that they didn't know what was happening at Ornge. Does the Premier admit that there's a serious systemic failure with respect to accountability and transparency at that organization and in this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've said clearly and our Minister of Health has said clearly that there was a serious issue of oversight at Ornge, that the past leadership failed to deliver what Ontarians needed in terms of service and accountability. That did not work.

That's why the legislation that we've introduced would appoint special investigators or a supervisor when it's in the public interest to do so, similar to the situation and the process we have in hospitals, would appoint members to Ornge's board of directors, would prescribe terms of the performance agreement between government and Ornge and put that in regulation, and would provide whistle-blowing protection for staff who have disclosed information to an inspector, investigator or ministry. That's why we brought the legislation in, because there was a failure of leadership at Ornge. We have said quite clearly that the past leadership at Ornge did not function in an appropriate way, and that's why we've taken action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The problem is that the people of Ontario are very skeptical about a government that struggles to invest in their priorities, but allows at the same time connected insiders to profit and get rich off of public money. The government has insisted that the public interest was protected at Ornge, and it simply was not, just like insiders were billing millions of dollars at eHealth, just like the government spent millions of dollars on cancelling gas plants. People are seeing a problem with this government. They want accountability.

Is the Premier ready to consider that there are some tangible steps that we can take to afford some accountability and some transparency to the people of Ontario and consider the idea of having a financial accountability office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think this question goes to the first question that the third party asked, and that is the idea that was put forward by the leader yesterday about a new accountability officer. Mr. Speaker, I've said

that it's an idea that we could look at, but in the context of the budget discussion, we need to know how long the list is of new ideas that will be coming forward from the NDP, because we have had a process that has led to the writing of this budget that was very different than the process last year. This year we spent a lot of time listening to what the third party said. We had the opportunity to interact with more than 600,000 people around the province. I met with folks in communities across the province at 10 jobs and economy round tables, so there was a lot of work that was done in the lead-up, and there is much in the budget that reflects the common ground between us and the third party and, I would suggest, between us and the Conservatives as well.

We need a decision now. I'm happy to have that meeting with the leader of the third party.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The incompetence and mismanagement of this government goes from bad to worse, and it's no more evident than in the Ministry of Health. At yesterday's public accounts committee we heard from Mr. Richard Jackson. He told us that he was hired to head up the minister's new air ambulance oversight program. When asked what experience he had in either air ambulance or land ambulance, he said "none." He told us he hired six individuals into that department to help him with his oversight responsibilities. When asked how much experience those six staff members have in air ambulance or land ambulance, he said "none."

Can the Premier tell us who was responsible for hiring this group of inexperienced people to oversee the most critical oversight responsibilities in the Ministry of Health?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear about exactly what the member opposite is talking about. He's talking about the air ambulance oversight branch, and there's another branch called the emergency health services branch. There is plenty of expertise in land and air ambulance operations in that branch, the emergency health services branch.

What the air oversight branch is designed to do is to ensure that transfer payment agencies are transparent, that they're accountable, that we get value for money when spending taxpayers' dollars. I think that's exactly the kind of expertise that the official opposition would want, Mr. Speaker, given what has transpired at Ornge. We need to be very careful, when we talk about the expertise that's needed, that we understand that there are different branches and that different expertise is needed depending on the task at hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I think what's important is that the Premier familiarize herself with the Ministry of Health. There are not two branches. The emergency health services branch is headed by the same person that heads the department within the emergency health

services branch which is the air ambulance program. It is the same person who has no experience in either land ambulance or air ambulance. The people who now are responsible for oversight of air ambulance have no experience in either land ambulance or air ambulance.

My question back to the Premier is this: When will this Premier recognize and admit that neither the Ministry of Health has competent leadership at either the minister's level, the deputy minister's level, the associate deputy minister's level, or the assistant deputy minister who hired these inexperienced people to have this important, crucial, oversight responsibility?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has made my point: that within the Ministry of Health there's different expertise that's necessary. What's important is that we have the right expertise performing the right function.

I would ask the member opposite, who is so concerned about oversight, as are we, that he work with us to get Bill 11 through committee, to stop stalling that bill. We need that legislation in place. We need that legislation to come back from committee, and the member opposite has a lot of control over whether that happens.

I know that his concern is genuine. I know he wants to make sure that oversight is in place. My hope is that he will work with his colleagues, we'll get Bill 11 back from committee and we'll be able to get that legislation in place, because that's where the accountability measures are.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. The government claims that building high-occupancy toll lanes could raise \$250 million a year for transit, yet there are no revenue projections in the budget and the government won't say where the lanes will be built or where the toll will be. Metrolinx puts the initial revenue from HOTs at \$25 million and says the HOTs are not a significant source of revenue for transit. So which is it: \$25 million a year or \$250 million a year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are indeed, in this budget, extending HOV lanes significantly, according to our long-term plan. This is so that families can get home and get to work, and we can enhance the quality and better use our highways.

There are some interesting studies that have come out of Washington and California, demonstrating the effectiveness of HOT lanes. We're going to look at this as an evidence-based process to enhance transit.

But our Big Move plan builds 15 remarkably important, critical pieces of transportation infrastructure: LRTs;

bus rapid transit. It is the biggest single investment in the history of Ontario in public transit. It is already under way on the Eglinton crosstown line and on half-hour, all-day, two-way service on the Lakeshore line, the biggest single transit improvement for people in the 905. We're very proud of that. We hope the party opposite will join us in supporting the financing of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister keeps on saying "HOV," but you're really proceeding with HOT lanes. These are the toll lanes we're talking about.

The government made similar rosy projections when it rolled out Presto, but we now know that this private sector misadventure has been very costly to taxpayers. Experts say that building new high-occupancy toll lanes costs more than \$700,000 per kilometre. That means millions will be spent to build 450 kilometres of these lanes before they generate a dime, and that's if everything goes perfectly.

Metrolinx says we will need \$2 billion a year in new money to pay for transit. Why is the government playing games with another risky, costly and complicated new payment system for the sake of a mere \$25 million a year?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I will speak very slowly so I'm not misunderstood. We are expanding the HOV lanes, and we will be introducing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Finish, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is not using his timing properly. He's not even listening while I'm trying to get him to stop.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know how to do that, if it's needed.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very clear; I'll speak slowly. We are expanding HOV lanes, and we will be introducing HOT lanes. We will be doing that strategically on an evidence-based process. We have the benefit of about 18 other projects going on in North America that are similar, and we will use that experience.

But Mr. Speaker, my question for my friend in the third party is, how are they going to pay for the commitments that both the Liberals and the New Democrats believe are critical?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, our Premier has been very candid.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have a plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Time's up.

New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Strengthening the social safety net is a very important issue to many people in Ontario. Those who have depended on social assistance in times of need appreciate the support provided to them and their families, and I've heard that first-hand from constituents in my riding of York South–Weston. Others are simply glad to know that the system is there for those who may need it. However, many of us are concerned that social assistance, as it exists now, may not be delivering all of the results that it could be for the most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario submitted their report to you at the end of last year. I remember, from earlier questions that you've answered, that you've been taking the time since then to review the report and to consider what actions the government might take to begin reform. Has the ministry undertaken to act on the suggestions for reform?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hard-working, hard-working.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: She is hard-working, in fact—and I want to let her know that I share her concerns. She's correct; we have been reviewing the recommendations, all 108 from the commission. To do that, we've been listening to a number of stakeholders. I think my ministry's met with 64 different groups, and we're getting some good feedback. Based on all of that information gathering, we're investing \$400 million over three years to support the increases in OW and ODSP, to also provide single adults with a \$14 top-up and allowing social assistance clients to earn—as a work incentive—and keep up to \$200.

We're also looking at assets, special provisions for First Nations and northern communities, as well as simplifying rules.

Jobs, the economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Again, to the minister: It is encouraging that this government plans, again, to be raising social assistance rates for all recipients. This step can make a difference in their lives, as will the increase in the earning exemption. While I recognize some of the items that you mentioned from the Lankin-Sheikh report, I believe that there was a lot more that was recommended.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister speak about what plans he has for some of those other recommendations included in the report?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Back to the member: We're going to be working in a very close way, and in a collaborative way, with a number of stakeholders to move us forward. There were a number of things in the report

that groups said they didn't want to see us implement, so there are bound to be some trade-offs, and we need to be careful about those.

That having been said, I think it's encouraging to know that this government is about fairness and is about moving forward. Jobs, the economy and a fair society are, of course, the government's top priorities, and reforming social assistance is a key part of that priority.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we will be working very hard. We'll be working together, collaboratively, and we would invite all members to join us.

By the way, we can't do the kinds of things that we want to do for those who need special help unless we get the budget through, so let's get at it, folks.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we've heard that the disagreement between you and your environment minister over the Liberal eco tax program has been so bad lately that you've personally taken over the file.

After rejecting the PC plan last November to scrap eco taxes and set waste diversion targets, the minister did an about-face last month claiming he was suddenly against eco taxes, but he failed to present a real solution to eliminate them. Instead, he wants to continue to charge eco taxes while keeping them hidden from consumers. You, on the other hand, want eco taxes to remain visible to consumers.

Premier, now that you're managing the environment portfolio, should Ontarians expect to still have eco taxes on their receipts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As we have done for some time, we have identified the real problem. Some of the members who have been here for some length of time who don't get a chance to ask questions for the Conservative Party anymore—the wily veterans, the great people who have served their people well—don't ask these. They would fully understand that the real problem is the Conservative bill that was passed in 2002. It allowed for cartels to be set up to be able to charge these particular fees.

1110

We tried to work with your old bill. We've worked very hard on that. It's impossible. That is why we'll be introducing a new bill to make the kinds of changes people happen to believe are needed.

You should go back to some of your colleagues who recognize how bad that bill was and encourage them to support the new bill that we will be introducing in this House that will in fact address many of the problems that have been there for some period of time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: You know what? Those programs were introduced by this government and the true godfather of the eco tax, the taxman himself, Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, we've heard your environment minister claim—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've reminded members in the past about this and I'll do so again. We refer to people according to their riding or their title.

Mr. Michael Harris: Premier, we've heard your environment minister claim on multiple occasions that the government doesn't receive any money from eco taxes. Well, he's totally wrong. The Liberal government has been secretly collecting its share of eco tax revenue for years, at a cost of up to \$100 million. According to Ontario Tire Stewardship's budget, right here, more than \$8.5 million of hidden HST charges were embedded in the Liberal's tire tax in 2011 alone, and that number is only going to rise with the Liberal's more than 2,000% tire tax hikes that unfairly target Ontario farmers.

Premier, do you continue to support eco taxes because you're profiting from imposing hidden taxes on Ontarians?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The legislation that the Conservatives put in place allowed that to happen. Now, we have implored, and I'm going to seek—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, you're warned. Finish.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm going to seek the assistance of some members of your caucus who may know this individual, the federal Minister of Finance, and try to get him to change the system, which in fact allows for HST. But the bill has to be changed completely.

What we should know is, the real godfather of eco fees in this province is your leader. Your leader was the then-Minister of Consumer and Business Services, and he allowed eco fees at that time. So when we're looking for godfathers of eco taxes out there, I think you should speak to your own leader, my friend Mr. Hudak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move on, I will also remind the Minister of the Environment that we use people's titles or their riding names.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham.

New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2010, this government slashed—everybody knows this—the benefits that our consumers receive in this province when it comes to auto insurance. This slash in the

statutory accident benefits resulted in a 70% drop in payouts to residents of the GTHA within one year alone. That's a 70% drop in claims payouts. Yet over the past three years, these very same residents haven't seen a penny of savings in the form of lower premiums.

How long does this government think those residents should have to wait before they see a drop in their premiums?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we need to do is get this budget passed so we can start getting at the issue about reducing automotive premium rates. I look to the leaders of both sides of the House, so let's get moving on that. We've already identified that the costs of claims are much too high. We've taken the steps necessary to try to reduce them. Some of those transfers are starting to take place. We need to give FSCO more teeth so that the regulator can start passing on those savings. We need you to act with us now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Later on today the Premier is scheduled to speak in Brampton and make some announcements regarding the budget. I want the Premier to be very well aware that the residents of Brampton know that the 15% reduction in auto insurance does not have any timelines whatsoever. This is a serious concern. This means that people in the GTA or in Hamilton could wait two years, three years, five years. No one knows how long it will take.

The benefits were slashed in 2010. That's three years ago. There has been a 70% reduction in claims payouts to residents of the GTA and Hamilton. How long does this government expect the residents of the GTA and Hamilton to wait before there's a 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The timeline will be dependent upon how quickly we get this budget passed. The member opposite knows the complexity of the file all too well. We know that we need to take proper measures to help the superintendent get the oversight and the authority required to ensure that the filings of those new rates take place. You know that we need to work with the industry to reduce the cost of claims. You know that in dealing with the industry and the players, they are now receptive to taking those steps as well. But what we need is this legislation to pass so that we can act quickly. You, yourself, recognize that it takes a gradual approach to get at the cause. You put that in your private member's bill. We agree. We all want this to happen quickly—the faster the better—so let's get on with getting this budget passed.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today, my question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Yesterday, Minister Chiarelli and I visited a company called Temporal Power, in Mississauga. As Ontarians, we can all be really proud

of the fact that Temporal Power leads not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but in the entire world when it comes to storing technology in flywheels.

It is companies like Temporal Power that are powering Ontario to new heights economically and creating new jobs, and I want to know from the Minister of Research and Innovation what we are doing to ensure that Ontario continues to be at the leading edge of technology and innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for that question. Supporting research and innovation is a major priority for our government. Since 2003, we have invested \$3.6 billion in research and innovation. This investment has helped create 30,000 jobs, 75,000 people were trained, and it also fostered 10,000 industry and academic partnerships.

In our budget of 2013, we reaffirm this government's commitment to research and innovation. I am proud of our government's investment of \$100 million in the Ontario Brain Institute, which supports cutting-edge research in brain diseases.

We are transforming global challenges into jobs and economic growth, and even furthermore, we are making better health care for Ontarians and also quality of life for people in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that update and for reaffirming our government's commitment to research and innovation.

Research and innovation is great, but it's only useful if we can commercialize it to improve our economy and help our society. To do this, we need to support our entrepreneurs. So, Minister, can you tell us: What is the government of Ontario doing to help and support entrepreneurs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. I am very proud of the leadership role our government has taken in venture capital. With the success of the Ontario Venture Capital Fund, we are partnering with our federal government and also the private sector.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't start right after I admonish you.

Hon. Reza Moridi: With a \$50-million investment, the Ontario Venture Capital Fund II has the potential to reach \$300 million. This fund will help to create the right environment for attracting investments to Ontario and also supporting innovation, the creation of jobs and the boosting of our economy.

Our recent budget will deliver a commitment on a commercialization and innovation voucher, and this voucher is going to help small businesses and entrepreneurs to reach research institutions in this province to solve their problems and also increase productivity.

Our government is taking important steps in order to support research and innovation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. On March 5, the Premier received a copy of the package from the municipality of North Perth concerning the industrial wind turbine project that threatens the community. It included a letter from the mayor, the municipal consultation form and my letter of support. The Premier should remember it; it was about an inch thick and I delivered it right to her, right here in the Legislature. I trust she has read it, but it's now over two months later, and we have had no response. My question to the Premier is simple: What was the very clear decision taken by council, and will she respect their will?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. The member will know that the Ontario Power Authority has had standing-offer procurements for renewable energy. Through that process, over the last several years, we've created over 31,000 jobs. We have stated quite clearly in our speech from the throne, and the Premier has repeated, that we are looking and working together in a number of ministries to improve how we deal with the siting of renewable energy projects. I am pleased to announce that in the very near future we'll have some new rules on the siting of renewable energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It sounds like the Premier will not support them. On this issue, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals are showing no more respect to my constituents than they did in the gas plant scandal. We also remember the throne speech, which suddenly claimed to understand the need for willing hosts on projects like wind turbines.

Well, our councils have spoken. North Perth, West Perth and many more have passed resolutions. They are, and I quote, "not a willing host" for industrial wind turbines, but the Premier continues to allow the wind project in our area to move through the old, broken process. And so I ask her, when will you stop trampling the overwhelming will of our communities and declare a moratorium, and what part of "not a willing host" do you not understand?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm looking for some leadership and advice from the other side of the House. We just heard a very significant amount of dialogue with respect to cancelling contracts. The position on the other side is that the government ought not to be unilaterally cancelling contracts, and we now have a request from the other side to unilaterally cancel a contract. I'm looking for

advice from the other side in terms of how we deal with the number of contracts that have been signed for which there might be some objections in the community, as there were in Mississauga and as there were in Oakville, and I'm challenging the member: Should we break this contract?

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. My office has been flooded by calls and emails from concerned seniors who live in retirement homes and supportive housing for seniors. They have been told that the physiotherapy programs that are keeping them healthy will be discontinued as of August 1. Dorothy Johnston wrote, "They just gave us this program to keep us healthy and in shape, and a couple of months later it's ripped from beneath us." Can the minister assure us and Ms. Johnston that her physiotherapy program will continue after August 1?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I thank the member for the question. Let me say that, beginning August 1, 2013, Ontario will provide more than 200,000 additional seniors with one-on-one physiotherapy. We will provide group exercise classes and fall prevention services as well. This will be provided in long-term-care homes and local community centres throughout our province of Ontario. Some 92 physiotherapy clinics are delivering the service today, enhancing access to exercise and fall prevention classes for an additional 68,000 seniors, for a total of 150,000 seniors. This is one way we deliver more service to our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Seniors living in buildings like Mohawk Gardens, a municipally run supportive housing building, will have no other options if their in-house physiotherapy is cancelled. The government can talk a good game about wanting seniors to stay active and healthy, yet they're about to discontinue a hugely successful program.

Barb Wyatt wrote, "If this program is cancelled"—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Excuse me; Barb Wyatt is speaking. "I have no other choice; I don't drive and I can't"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I'm speaking. Stop the clock.

I'll stop it this time, but it's very difficult to have the question put when somebody on the same side is heckling, and it's hard for me to get to the people who are heckling on this side if somebody on that side is heckling. So please keep it down.

Finish your question, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

Barb Wyatt wrote, "If this program is cancelled, I have no other choice; I don't drive and I can't afford public transit that frequently."

What is the minister doing to ensure that seniors in retirement homes can continue to access physiotherapy?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, it's a fair and a good question. Let me assure the member and every member of the House that there are no changes with respect to accessibility to the system or to the care that seniors are receiving in community care, in retirement homes. As a matter of fact, Speaker, what's being proposed, the amendments that are being proposed, will give 280,000 more seniors access to home care on a one-to-one basis in more locations throughout Ontario, and this is what we want to do for our people, especially living in nursing homes, in seniors' homes, and in home care and at home as well.

Speaker, it's the intent of this government to provide more services when they are needed and where they are needed to our seniors, and this is what we'll be doing.

FIRE SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Last November, I heard the minister speak about expediting the technical consultation on fire safety improvements in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. I was glad to hear this morning that the minister announced the mandatory use of sprinklers in all retirement homes, nursing homes and residences for the disabled. Can the minister please tell us more about what this will mean for all our seniors?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Let me say thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for this question. Last Monday, I was very pleased to be with the Premier to announce the making of automatic sprinklers mandatory in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and vulnerable citizens—the first province to achieve that in Canada.

These changes to the fire code will include a phase-in of mandatory sprinklers for all existing care residences and retirement homes with more than four occupants over the next five years, annual validation of fire safety plans, enhanced fire inspection and staff training, and fire safety enhancements for all new retirement homes.

In closing, I wanted to congratulate the Minister of Housing, the minister responsible for seniors, the member from Niagara and the member from Hamilton East—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Back to the minister: I'm delighted to hear about our government's groundbreaking announcement. I know that our government has always been strongly committed to fire safety. We've required smoke alarms on every floor of homes, we updated the safety requirements for hotels, and so much more.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what kind of input we received from the retirement home sector?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I thank the remarkable member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the questions. Let me say

that seniors in retirement homes need to feel safe and secure. By mandating fire sprinklers and enhancing fire safety measures, the Wynne government is demonstrating its commitment to the well-being of our seniors in Ontario.

But that's not all. The 2013 budget is a document written with seniors in mind: increasing investments in home care and community services, helping seniors with low and moderate incomes in getting their Trillium benefits program on a monthly or on a one-yearly basis, providing 30,000 more house calls to seniors and others with complex conditions.

It is the announcement, but it's about celebrating the positive results of a collaborative process that puts seniors and other vulnerable Ontarians first.

1130

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. You know, we on this side of the House are also hearing from Ontarians about the budget. I'd like to share one story that we've heard. Andrea from Hamilton told us that people were "tired of being ignored by governments that seemed more concerned with themselves, more concerned with their own political skin, with their own political opportunity, with their own political well-being than they were with everyday people."

Andrea from Hamilton is 100% correct. People are tired of this government. So, Premier, will you call the PC Party want of confidence motion today, so that Andrea from Hamilton can have her wish: a new accountable government for the people of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order. The member from Thornhill, come to order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last call. The member from Halton is warned. The member from Barrie is warned.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the member should be aware that in several days from now, according to the standing orders, we will have a vote on the budget motion, which is a confidence vote. We look forward to that vote, and their participation in it.

When the budget bill reaches second reading, for example—just one example—that will be a confidence motion. When it returns here to the House for third reading, that will be another confidence motion—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just say yes one more time.

Hon. John Milloy: But again I want to go back—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Finish.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to again go back, and perhaps the honourable member in his supplementary could answer a question that we've been asking over here: Why did his party oppose the gas plants in the last election? Why did they campaign so aggressively? When will they put forward their costing and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Hon. John Milloy: —when will their candidates appear in front of committee and why has it taken his leader weeks and weeks to agree?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: You know, it's funny that the government House leader mentions the budget. Let's see what Andrea from Hamilton has to say about that budget: "We want to see a balanced approach with a budget that's accountable to people, a budget that tackles people's concerns about creating jobs and growing our economy while helping them in their daily lives and balancing the books in a balanced way."

Mr. Speaker, Andrea from Hamilton knows, the Ontario PC Party knows, the people of Ontario know that the budget presented by that government doesn't reflect the priorities of Ontarians because the priorities of Ontarians are not to waste \$600 million on a gas plant scandal to save some Liberal seats.

Premier, the people of Ontario do not have to be held hostage by this dysfunctional budget negotiation side-show. You can end the charade right now by calling our show of confidence motion. Will you do it today? Let's get on with fixing what's wrong with your government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member stands up and talks about the gas plants. Again, we want to know over on this side of the House why Tim from the Fort Erie area—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: —you trivialize the people of Ontario. You should be ashamed of yourself. You're disgusting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is named.

Mr. Chudleigh was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Order, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order. You are warned. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, come to order.

Before I finish, as much as everyone might think that's cute on both sides, I think we should still be respectful of this place. If we think we can skirt rules, that means that you're not trying to find the highest ground here. My recommendation, clearly, again and again and again, is to

use members' titles or their riding. To try to skirt them is not what I call impressive.

Finish your answer, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lot of people that would like to know why the Leader of the Opposition so aggressively opposed the plants; perhaps because it's topical, Mr. Speaker.

We'd also like to know why the member from Halton had this to say to the Toronto Sun on October 7, 2010: "It was sad that it took so long for the government to listen to the people of Oakville ... so it was nice to see that decision overturned."

Mr. Speaker, these are not complicated questions. When will we see PC candidates appear in front of the committee? When will they be encouraging their colleagues to be there?

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. This government has just wasted \$600 million on the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. But apparently you haven't learned your lesson. The government has now signed \$1 billion worth of contracts for refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear power plant, even though, according to the Toronto Star, you haven't even made the decision as to whether or not to go ahead. Why is the government continuing to waste public money on these secret energy deals?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there are two separate issues. There's the issue of refurbishment of Darlington units and there's the issue of possibly building new units at Darlington. He's referring to something that appeared in the Toronto Star today that was totally referencing the possibility of new nuclear. In terms of new nuclear, we should be aware of the fact, of course, that the New Democratic Party built 3,500 megawatts of nuclear during their term. Those units are still in place. The important thing is that a decision has to be made on whether or not we're going to shut them down or proceed. We're taking some very, very serious advice on new nuclear. That's under deliberation. We're receiving the best advice possible, and we're not going to rush the decision. I assure the critic from the New Democratic Party that we're dealing with it responsibly and we're going to be proceeding—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Hamilton Mountain has given notice of her dissatisfaction to the answer to her question given by the minister responsible for seniors concerning physiotherapy services for seniors in retirement and supportive housing. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: We are pleased to have members from YouthCAN and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth here in the Legislature today. Maybe they will behave. Both groups were instrumental in organizing the Youth Leaving Care hearings, and publishing My Real Life Book and the Youth Leaving Care blueprint for change. Thank you for your work, and I want to acknowledge you for being here today for the discussion of the private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our young people here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Today I rise on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus to recognize Jewish Heritage Month.

Last year, May was declared Jewish Heritage Month when members of all three parties supported this bill. The bill was co-sponsored by my colleague PC MPP Peter Shurman, the member from Thornhill, because we wanted an annual celebration of our Jewish Canadian communities' many achievements, recognizing their tremendous contributions to our province and abroad.

I am proud to say that Ontario has one of the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the world, full of accomplished individuals who have made a significant impact on our province and beyond.

I have had the chance to meet members of the Jewish community on numerous occasions and there has always been an unshakable determination to create a better future for their families. This determination is giving Ontario its leaders in business, politics, the arts, journalism, academia and more. Members of Ontario's Jewish community have helped grow the economy and shape our culture, hosting events and welcoming all Ontarians to join in the festivities.

The Jewish community is also to be recognized for its commitment to community and helping those less fortunate. This month we'll see many activities in our local communities, bringing together thousands of people, especially during the annual UJA walk.

Once again, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus, I wish everyone celebrating Jewish Heritage Month a wonderful time with your friends and family.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: On April 28, I took part in the National Day of Mourning ceremonies in Kenora to remember those who have been killed or injured in the workplace.

With a resource-based economy, we in the northwest are no strangers to these types of catastrophic, life-altering events. There is probably not a single extended family or circle of friends who have not been affected by a workplace debilitating injury or death.

For those who escape with their lives but who are unable to return to work, they face a life of chronic pain and stigma. Many workers who do survive these events end up battling depression, addictions and, tragically, some end up taking their lives.

We often forget that these individuals are victims, yet the few supports that are in place for injured workers, namely WSIB, treat these survivors as if they were criminals. They are subject to humiliating treatment, and far too many are forced to fight for years to receive even the most basic benefits from a system that is said to be designed to protect them, but their only crime was putting in an honest day's work to put food on the table.

The system is in need of major reform, and there needs to be recognition that these individuals are human beings who deserve a life of dignity and respect.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to highlight a wonderful local initiative in my community that will save lives. On Saturday, April 27, the Gloucester North Lions Club ran an organ donor drive hosted by Place d'Orléans, a local mall in my riding. They partnered with the Trillium Gift of Life Network to give local Ottawa-Orléans residents an opportunity to sign up as organ and tissue donors. As mentioned before in the House, April was organ donor month in Ontario.

In the past year, we saw Ontario's organ donor list grow by nearly a quarter million, as citizens registered their consent to organ and tissue donations. That brings the total number of registered donors in the province to 2.6 million people. I'm proud of the contribution that members from my community made.

The local effort was led by Lion Mark Marcogliese and by Lion Pierrette Woods, who's also a tissue recipient. She told me that without her transplant, she would not be able to take part in her favourite activity: watching her grandchildren play hockey.

Also present were heart recipients J.P. Carrière and Denis Richardson. I was amazed to learn that Denis is now in his 20th year since his transplant. He's a living testament to how far medicine in Ontario has come.

I would like to thank all the volunteers from the Lions Club and Trillium Gift of Life Network, as well as Place d'Orléans, for hosting this life-saving initiative.

I encourage all those who have not yet registered to take two minutes out of their day to give the gift of life at www.beadonor.ca.

STRATFORD ACCELERATOR CENTRE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today is the grand opening of the Stratford Accelerator Centre, a new facility created in

partnership with the University of Waterloo, Stratford campus, the city of Stratford, and the Waterloo Accelerator Centre.

Supporting early-stage technology and digital media start-ups is their mission. They bring entrepreneurs together to deliver world-class mentoring, coaching, programming and services. They accept clients through a competitive application and intake process, and work to accelerate their growth from vision to early market success.

The accelerator centre is a perfect fit for Stratford and for Perth–Wellington. It builds on our reputation for excellence in business, technology, innovation and culture.

Now more than ever, we need to accelerate the dreams of our entrepreneurs so that we can accelerate job creation and economic growth. After all, we have no greater resource than the dreams, knowledge and potential of our people.

In Waterloo, the accelerator program has helped to create nearly 1,000 jobs since it began seven years ago. They are creating a more diverse, more vibrant economy. That's a terrific achievement, and we look forward to similar success in Stratford.

I wish I could be there for today's grand opening, but I'm looking forward to joining Shane Pegg, director of strategic initiatives, at the accelerator centre later this month.

I know all members of the Legislature will want to join me in congratulating everyone involved with the centre, as well as the university and the city.

ELLIOT LAKE GAY PRIDE WEEKEND

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope you won't forget that compliment I gave you yesterday, because I need to cash it in today.

I would like to recognize a group in my riding that is celebrating Elliot Lake's diversity and highlighting its inclusiveness. Elliot Lake Pride is the first annual pride festival in Elliot Lake. It was created as a celebration of diversity and a way to help community members connect with one another.

The event will be held on the weekend of May 31, and all visitors and residents are invited to come out and celebrate this community's diversity. It is our diversity that makes us a unique and resilient community and, together, we support one another.

The Elliot Lake Pride Committee is chaired by Douglas Elliott, who grew up in Elliot Lake and is now a Toronto-based lawyer. The committee also features Mayor Rick Hamilton.

The event will be held on May 31, with an assembly at Elliot Lake Secondary School, with featured speaker Mark Bonham, who started the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto. He will be addressing the assembly about bullying of LGBT students in schools across the country. This is an

important message, as bullying is a problem that has made news headlines across the country, with many youth taking their own lives as a result of torment from others.

There will be many other events, including a flag-raising, a barbecue, a beverage garden, a comedy show and a youth party. There will also be a service at St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church.

It is important we take a stance against discrimination and violence of any kind and promote equal rights to human dignity. This is a great opportunity to build our community and affirm ourselves as an inclusive community that welcomes all. And it all starts with me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm just finishing a conversation which gave you that favour, so don't forget that I gave you your favour.

KNIGHTS TABLE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about the Knights Table food bank in my riding of Brampton West. It gives me great pride to say that the Knights Table is now in its 20th year of service to the people of Brampton.

The Knights Table is Peel region's only soup kitchen that is open 365 days a year. In addition to its meals programs, Knights Table also offers food bank services and other social supports to those individuals and families impacted by hunger, poverty and homelessness in our community.

1310

Just some numbers, Mr. Speaker: There are over 56,000 meals served annually. The Knights Table serves 1,800 families weekly. It has 1,500 volunteers and 42,000 volunteer hours.

The staff and volunteers assist the clients regardless of colour, culture, religion, economic status, gender, sexual orientation or social condition. We are dedicated to inspiring all people to achieve their full potential. The Knights Table helps by providing food bank services, hot meals and other services to the people of Brampton who deal with the daily issues of hunger, poverty and homelessness.

I would like to especially recognize the staff and volunteers at the food bank because without their hard work and dedication, nothing would be possible. Keep up the good work, and best of luck in your new location.

NURSES

Mr. Bill Walker: Today I rise in the House to talk about a unique experience that we MPPs are privileged to participate in: the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's Take Your MPP to Work Day. For a day, we're invited to shadow our hard-working front-line nurses all across Ontario and experience first-hand what their working life is like.

I myself took part in my first Take Your MPP to Work Day last April when I joined nurses at the Sauble Family

Health Team and also at the Grey Bruce Health Unit to get a snapshot of their day-to-day realities.

I also have the greatest admiration for nurses. As executive director of the Bruce Peninsula Health Services Foundation, I saw first-hand for six years what our nurses do. To me, they truly are the heartbeat of our health system.

This year, on May 24, I will shadow the Grey-Bruce Alzheimer Society to learn more about how they help to improve patients' health outcomes and quality of life by providing expert, knowledge-based, client-centred or patient-centred—what I like to believe—care.

As I said in this House a few days ago in recognition of international Nursing Week, I think our nurses are world-class for their skills, compassion and dedication.

I know our leader, Tim Hudak, and my colleagues are heading to public health units, community health centres, hospitals and nursing homes this month to learn about the important work that our front-line nurses do. Our health critic, the MPP for Whitby, Christine Elliott, will be at a breakfast at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences in Whitby tomorrow.

Speaker, our nurses truly are the backbone. They are the front-line care. They are the people who care and have compassion for the patients they serve. I wish them all the best and I'm glad that I can participate in Take Your MPP to Work Day.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to tell you about a very exciting initiative that's taking place in my community. It's called the Great Oakville Pursuit—Breaking the Silence on Youth Mental Health.

The Pursuit is based on the Amazing Race, and it features teams of high school students heading to different Oakville landmarks. There, they will be greeted by various mental health organizations at the locations who will lead them in challenges, with a goal to learn more about youth mental health and break the stigma that's associated with it.

The Pursuit kicked off a couple of weeks ago with a youth mental health expo at town hall that featured speakers and many local organizations.

The event is actually organized by members of my Oakville Provincial Youth Advisory Committee. Every year, two students from each high school are invited to take part and discuss issues that are important to them. One year, the focus was on the civics program. The next year the focus was on anti-bullying. But this year's committee chose to increase awareness about youth mental health and the importance of breaking the stigma and talking about it.

So I want to thank all those involved for organizing tomorrow's event and helping to raise awareness about youth mental health in our community. It certainly is something that I'd like to see spread throughout Ontario, because being able to talk about youth mental health is

one big step forward to being able to deal with the problems that we should have been dealing with for many years.

AGRICULTURE IN DURHAM

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure today to stand up and put a voice to my riding of Durham, which is probably one of the leading areas in Ontario for agriculture. I'm so impressed with the innovation and leadership that I'm going to take the time to inform the viewer and the listener about things that are happening in my riding in the agricultural field.

It started this past weekend with the most famous spring fair. It was a maple fest, very widely attended and very widely appreciated. It really showed the harvest in the early spring within Durham, and the maple syrup and pancakes were fantastic.

I want to thank Garth for the breakfast that he provided for me; I'll leave it at that. I can't think of his last name at the moment.

But a more innovative thing that's going on is, Marlene Werry is a consultant in agriculture in our area, and she's part of a program that's being developed in horticulture at Durham College. I would commend Don Lovisa, who is the president of Durham College, and the program that they have put together.

The program at Durham College addresses the shift in the focus of food quality, and it's exciting to introduce a new horticultural food farming program which will start this fall. It's a two-year diploma program to prepare students to become part of the popular and rapidly evolving food sector. The food production sector is widely viewed as being immune from changing economic cycles, and with today's food costs, job opportunities will continue to increase.

In Ontario alone, there are 3,000 agri-food companies with nearly \$34 billion in manufacturing revenue. Currently, the agriculture and food sector in Ontario is a leading part of the economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows—I think you've heard this one before:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into" older vehicles.

This is a large issue at this time of year, and I don't think the ministry is paying attention—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will refrain from making editorial comments.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the applause.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with disabilities like cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and autism; and

"Whereas this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs with a developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases client services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential care and day program supports province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to affix my signature and give it to Brigid to be delivered.

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DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) previously covered one ... (Pap) test a year for women in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society estimated that 1,350 Canadian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 390 died from the disease in 2012, and that this valuable test is a simple screening procedure that can help prevent cancer of the cervix; and

"Whereas the province through OHIP now only covers the cost of a test once every three years under new rules that took effect January 1; and

"Whereas women who want an annual Pap test now have to pay for the screening themselves under the new rules;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the OHIP funding for annual Pap tests for women in order to help prevent" cervical "cancer and ensure women's overall health and well-being."

I affix my signature in full support, Speaker.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the process popularly known as 'declawing' is actually an amputation of a cat's toes that is both painful and unnecessary;

"Whereas research has shown declawing a cat significantly reduces a cat's quality of life and leads to both behavioural and health problems;

"Whereas declawing removes a cat's natural defences and leaves them helpless in situations where their life may be in danger;

"Whereas most reputable cat shelters have a no-declawing policy, due to the permanent damage it causes; and

"Whereas the process is considered to be" an inhumane practice "and is banned in many jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ban the unnecessary and inhumane medical procedure known as declawing in the province of Ontario."

I support this. I will sign it and give it to page Megan to deliver to the table.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to look after their sick or injured family members without fearing that they will lose their jobs at such a vulnerable time;

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to spend time looking for a child that has disappeared, or take time off to grieve the death of a child that was murdered without fearing that they will lose their jobs;

"Whereas the federal government has recently extended similar leaves and economic supports to federal employees;

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario families and wish to foster mental and physical well-being by allowing those closest to sick or injured family members the time to provide support free of work-related concerns;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act."

I fully support the petition and I give it to Gabriel.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario relating to the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the town of Newmarket official plan was developed through extensive community consultation and commits the town council to manage growth based on specific principles;

"Whereas section 1.3.3 of the official plan states that growth should occur in a way that not only increases the quality of life for existing residents but also provides a functional environment for the future by protecting and enhancing existing natural features and systems;

"Whereas a key principle set out in section 2.1 of the official plan is a commitment to protect and strengthen existing neighbourhoods;

"Whereas section 3.2.1 states that the objective of the stable residential area policies of the official plan is to sustain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential communities;

"Whereas the town of Newmarket has received an application from Marianneville Development Ltd. that, if approved, would impose an additional 730 housing units into the existing, long-established Glenway community;

"Whereas the Glenway community was not designed to accommodate the water, sewer, traffic and other infrastructure requirements of the proposed development application;

"Whereas the proposed development would not only change the character and identity of the Glenway community, it would have a negative impact on quality of life, would erode property values and would threaten the health and safety of its residents;

"Whereas the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 provide for a significant portion of new growth to take place through intensification of built-up areas;

Therefore, "we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

"The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space;

"The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality."

Speaker, I affix my signature to this petition. I believe it's the right thing for this Legislature to do to preserve existing communities.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to add my signature and give it to Karinna to be delivered to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty-Wynne" Liberal "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I support this petition fully and will give it to page Chedi.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in northwestern Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I wholeheartedly support this. I'm going to sign it and give it to Daniel to deliver to the table.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24; and

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces, leading to constituents in eastern Ontario buying tires in Quebec to

avoid the tax and driving Ontario's businesses out of business; and

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75; and

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships; and

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

1330

"To suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Brigid.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to enjoy their benefits;

"Whereas Ontario's Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

"Whereas these exceptions ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment" in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources."

I wholeheartedly support this. I'm going to sign it and give it to page Ethan to deliver to the table.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jim McDonell: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario;

"Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas the chair of the WSIB—in committee meetings last year—admitted this will not help cover the accumulated WSIB debt, but make the problem" even "worse by adding further liabilities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and passing it off to the page.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Speaker, I move that, in the opinion of this House, be it resolved that every member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unite to end violence against women and girls in all forms, by building awareness, better law enforcement and by encouraging more emphasis on coordinated community response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Mangat has moved ballot item number 22, private

member's notice of motion number 27. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by thanking Mark Creedon, executive director of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, in the west public gallery; and also Robert Varga, the president of performance management and accountability, who is here on behalf of Central West Community Care Access Centre.

I would also like to thank all the women and girls and other organizations who are supporting this motion and who are not able to come to Queen's Park.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the fundamental human right of all women and girls to live their lives free of violence. Violence against women and girls is an evil. Women have been the victims of violence all through the ages, in all societies, cultures and regions of the world.

The United Nations theme for International Women's Day this year is "A Promise is a Promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women" and girls—a great theme, but a monumental task. It calls for a strong political will, allocation of ample resources and coordinated efforts by governments and communities all across the world.

Mr. Speaker, today let's look back on a year of shocking crimes of violence against women and girls and ask ourselves how to usher in a better society. One young woman was gang-raped to death. Another committed suicide out of a sense of shame that should have attached to the perpetrators. Young teens were shot at close range for daring to seek an education. Those heinous crimes, which rightly sparked global outrage, were part of a much larger problem that pervades virtually every society and every realm of life.

In some societies, rigid cultural norms and patriarchal attitudes devalue the role of women, expose them to violence and ruin their peace and happiness. In many societies, religious traditions have played a negative role in shaping the attitudes and personalities of women and in determining their unequal social status. In some societies, a family structure in which the man is deemed to be the absolute ruler of the household and activities within the family are seen as private allows violence to occur at home.

The roots of violence against women and girls are founded in the belief that the needs, feelings and beliefs of one person or one group are more important or more correct than those of another person or group. This creates a rationale for humiliation, intimidation, control, abuse and even murder.

Despite great strides made by women activists and governmental and non-governmental agencies all across the world, gender inequality is starkly visible in all areas of human life, including politics, religion, cultural norms and the workplace. We need not look too far to find gender inequality. We just have to look around us. It's everywhere, in one form or another.

There can be no progress made in this area if societies across the world continue to foster gender inequality and

tolerate physical and emotional abuse of women and girls.

The most common form of violence that women experience all across the world is physical and emotional violence inflicted by an intimate partner. Yet there are other forms: rape, mutilation, degradation through dowry, prostitution, sexual slavery and infanticide of female fetuses. According to the United Nations, on average at least one in three women is beaten, sexually assaulted or otherwise abused by an intimate partner during her lifetime.

On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. There are about 580 known cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women in Canada.

It is estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. Every minute of every day, a Canadian woman or child is being sexual assaulted. These statistics describe the enormity of human suffering that victims experience.

The cost of violence against women in Canada for health care, social services, criminal justice and lost wages and productivity has been estimated at \$4.2 billion per year.

We also must remember that, too often, silent victims of this form of violence are our children. Children who witness family violence often display elevated rates of depression, aggression, delinquency and other forms of emotional problems, and tend to have low school achievement and social skills.

Witnessing violence increases the chances that boys will grow up to act violently with their intimate partners. For girls, it increases the chances that they will accept violence in their dating or in their marital relationships.

1340

Victims too often stay silent or feel that they have to live in shame, that somehow they have done something wrong. They feel trapped and isolated. As a result, domestic violence too often ends in greater tragedy.

Violence against women and girls happens everywhere—at home, at the workplace, in the schools and on the street—during peacetime and in conflict. Not ending violence against women and girls is not an option. At the same time, ending violence against women and girls is not something that governments can do alone. Each and every one of us has a role to play. By working together, we can raise awareness in our communities, work towards better law enforcement, and encourage more emphasis on a coordinated community response. Every woman or girl deserves to live her life free of violence, and every child deserves to grow up knowing that there is no threat of violence in the home, in school, or on the streets.

While the United Nations theme to raise public awareness and to encourage political will for ending all forms of violence against women and girls is laudable, the violence will only end when many voices, including our

voices, say in unison, “A promise is a promise; let’s end violence against women and girls.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on the motion by the member from Mississauga–Brampton South requesting that the members of the Legislature unite in their efforts to end violence against women and girls. You heard her speak very passionately about the issue and heard some very staggering examples and statistics that she brought forward.

As my party’s critic for women’s issues, I’ve spoken on this matter on a number of occasions. Violence against women is a serious and far-reaching issue and is not acceptable. No community in Ontario or the world is immune. We have all heard the frightening statistics of violence and sexual assaults against women and girls in Ontario and Canada, as well as the ones that were brought up by my colleague today.

What makes it even more disturbing is that, as bad as these figures are, nine out of 10 sexual assaults are never reported to the police. Consequently, the problem of violence against women is even worse in our society than the numbers would indicate, which I know upsets me and upsets all of us. There is this daunting problem that crosses all boundaries—cultural, racial, economic and social—and impacts females of any age. The motion that we are discussing this afternoon talks about the need to build awareness within our society of the destructive impact that such violence has, not only on the victims, but also their families and our whole society.

The law enforcement and judicial systems need to deal with this problem in a way that the victims aren’t made to feel guilty and ashamed. And, as I said in my comments last week marking women abuse prevention month and the great work that’s being done in organizations just in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and across Ontario, they do help victims of violence. They are critical and essential. But these initiatives, as important as they are, are, by their very nature, designed to treat the results of violence against women, not the root causes of the problem. Violence against women is not an issue that should be reserved to whispered conversations; there needs to be an honest, open and ongoing dialogue about the issue and a candid exchange of our ideas. Our ultimate goal must be to stop all forms of violence against women and girls before it even begins. There is no one solution, but education and understanding is a prerequisite to any serious attempt at addressing the problem.

Young men need to learn at an early age that displaying violence against women—and that can be verbal as well as physical—is not acceptable behaviour in a civilized society.

We all have a part to play. When we observe violence or abuse against women and girls, it’s not acceptable to turn a blind eye. The health and safety of the victims is far too important. We cannot keep silent. Domestic and sexual violence will not end until both men and women become part of the solution.

I am proud to say that there are many members of the PC Party who want to speak to this issue today. I will say that we are in full support of the motion brought forward today, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I will always remember, back in my days in ministry, a Saturday morning when the church was extremely busy—there were yoga classes, there were youth groups meeting—and I was in my office when one of the women in our congregation, the wife of a very prominent business person who earned a good salary, came racing into the church and asked if I could hide her. I said, “What do you mean, ‘hide’ you?” She said, “My husband is after me, and I’m frightened of him. I’m frightened of what he will do.”

I put her in my office, and I closed the door. He came in, and he was in a rage. I gathered that he had been drinking. He went around the church banging on doors, looking for her. In that instance, I had a very good illustration of what her life looked like at home. At home were three small children; in fact, she had left them with a babysitter so that she could run out. Finally, we managed to move him out of the church. Clearly, even calling the police would have taken too long in that instance.

It’s the only real time that I felt true terror in my job in that church, despite the fact that we had a high-needs community. We had people who had crack addictions and mental health issues, but never had I felt true terror until that moment with that woman.

I asked her after we got him out, “Why do you stay? Why don’t you leave if this is what you’re living with?” She gave a very telling answer. She said, “I can’t afford to go. Where would I go? I would lose my children if I left, because I can’t afford to keep them. I can’t go to a shelter with my children.” I understood why she wouldn’t want to go to a shelter with her children. She said, “I’m there to protect them. That’s why I stay, and I’m there because I cannot afford to leave.” This was a woman of some means, presumably; imagine all the women out there who haven’t those means.

I want to talk about the backdrop to violence, because there’s active violence—those are the perpetrators of violence. We can all agree, I think, in this House, that they should be dealt with, and swiftly. But then there’s the backdrop that allows it to happen, and that is the issue of poverty, which is a women’s issue in the province of Ontario. Poverty is a women’s issue. It bears a woman’s face.

Yesterday, you heard my friend from Beaches–East York, who talked about the length of time a woman-headed family with three children would wait for affordable housing. That time is 24 years. That’s the waiting list: 24 years, in this province, for affordable housing. That’s something we can do something about. We can do something about the housing file. Instead of having the worst record in all of Canada in terms of per capita investment for housing, we could have the best. That’s something that we could do to help women.

Women make 72 cents on the dollar to men. We could do something about that equity issue. We could move on that. That would help women who experience violence.

We could, for example, help an organization called Victim Services, which is just down here on College Street. Luckily, they get free housing from our police—thank you, police, for giving them free office space. They are the only agency in all of Toronto that, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, goes out when there is a domestic violence call; actually goes out to the house and assists the victim. They do so with a huge army of volunteers and very few professional social workers. Why do they need such an army of volunteers? Because their funding has not gone up in 20 years. They’re funded by this government. In fact, their funding has fallen per capita in that time from over \$200 in the 1990s to \$31 per victim today. Again, this is something we could do. This is something the government could act on tomorrow if they had the will to help women who are active victims. That just takes money—that’s all it takes—and that’s something we could do.

1350

Yes, act of violence: Do something. I believe when one in three women are being assaulted at some point in their lives, this is a tragedy; this is a disaster. This requires input from all levels of government. Of course we’re going to support the motion the member has brought forward, but—and the “but” is a very large one—it’s not enough to just ask for awareness. Women who are being abused and beaten as we speak here in the comfort and safety of this Legislature need help now. That help has a dollar value attached to it and that help should be forthcoming.

On the brighter side—it’s such a horrible topic to have to speak about; we speak about it every year and we’re going to speak about it more, hopefully, if this motion passes—but on the side of who’s doing what about this, I do want to bring the members’ attention to tomorrow. This weekend, as we know, is Mother’s Day. Tomorrow, here, we are having a press conference featuring the leaders of a number of faith groups across Ontario who will all sign on to a document that says that they, as leaders in their faith groups, are committed to ending violence against women. That has a powerful symbolic value because many of us who are faith leaders know that within our scriptures there are problematic passages. We are more aware of that than anyone. So it’s important, it’s very important, that faith leaders stand up around this issue and speak out in support of women—and they are. For the first time, we have a Sikh member coming tomorrow. We have Buddhists, we have rabbis and we have leaders of many Christian faith groups who are coming. All will sign on to that.

That is a powerful statement. It’s a powerful action that says wherever you are, if you’re part of faith groups—and we know that women are large parts of faith groups. In fact, in most congregations, women take the lead in terms of keeping the congregation vibrant across the face. To have their leaders come and take time out to

focus on this just before Mother's Day is the best Mother's Day card I can think of that faith leaders can give to women in our congregations.

That, by the way, was an all-party effort. We all came together to make that happen under the umbrella called Ruth's Daughters of Canada. Every few years we do this here, and it's always very moving and very important. That's happening. I'll leave some minutes for my colleague as well.

But—but—we have to do due diligence in this Legislature. We have to fund groups like Victim Services so that they can do their work, my goodness. We have to do something about the housing crisis in this province—it's been going on for 10 years—because it affects women and children the most. We could have moved faster on the child tax benefit—25 in 5 has asked us to—because wherever children are, women are, and it helps them. There is so much more we need to do that we are able to do here. I certainly hope that before this government ends its term, we do get some action.

Again, to all of those women who are perhaps listening and to those families who are listening—because violence against women affects families, not just women—please know that there is help available. Please search for it. Please look for it. Please know that everyone here's heart is with you. Our prayers are with you. Our support is with you. You do not have to go through this alone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak for a minute or two on this private member's motion. I say only a minute or two because there's a great deal of interest in our caucus from various members who want to speak on it, and many of them want to come forward and share their thoughts.

I'll be very brief and begin by congratulating the member from Mississauga—Brampton South for bringing forward this very, very important issue, this motion which, obviously, I intend to support very, very strongly.

The issue of domestic violence, violence against women and children, is something I will confess, before I got elected, I was of course aware of, as we all are through media and other experiences that we've had in a general sense. But it wasn't until I had the privilege of being a member of provincial Parliament and got to see the outstanding agencies and the outstanding work that happens in my community that I realized the seriousness of the issue, the severity—unfortunately, I have to say “the severity”—of the issue. But I think also more importantly, these are not issues that are out there somewhere vaguely in another part of town or another part of the community; these are issues that cross socio-economic lines—as the member spoke so eloquently about, are not limited to one particular group or another. These are issues which, unfortunately, we are confronting as a society everywhere.

I want to pay tribute to the number of people, the number of organizations, that have come out to, first of all, raise awareness about this but, of course, more

importantly to make sure we are a safer society and one that deals with people in crisis situations. I come from Waterloo region, and we're very proud of an initiative that was put in place a number of years ago based on an experience in the United States. It's called the Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region. What it was, or its foundation—I speak of it in the past tense—is that a group of organizations came together so that they could create one access point for a woman, or women and children, that are in crisis so they could go to one location and receive support from the police and from counselling. If they needed help to go to a shelter situation, they would have all that support under one roof. What we've seen is a transformation in our community in Waterloo region where women are able to access the services in a very timely way.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to leave time for other members, but I want to pay tribute to the leadership of the Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region. I want to talk about all the different agencies that are involved with it and collaborate with it. I can think of Anselma House, which has a shelter in my community: a brand new shelter which is, I think, a source of pride for all of us, that we're there for troubled individuals. I want to pay a special tribute to the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, which this very day is hosting a conference called Understanding Survivors of Human Trafficking, another aspect of this topic today, and I certainly want to give credit to them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up by once again congratulating my colleague. This is a very, very important issue, and certainly I think all members should come together not only to support the motion but support the principle and spirit behind it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a distinct honour and pleasure to stand and support the motion from the member from Mississauga—Brampton South. I commend her for her efforts putting this bill forward.

I'm also proud to stand with the vast majority of men, Mr. Speaker, who respect and value the women in our lives, whether they be our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our co-workers—any female who has had influence in our lives, and I know I've had many.

To think that anyone could even dream of abusing anyone, especially some of the recent events we've seen in the States that are just appalling—it really brings this to light, that it is an issue that we need to address. I've had the pleasure and sometimes the displeasure of acting as a mediator for family mediation, and I've been up close and personal with domestic abuse and have been trained to spot it. It is out there and it is particularly heinous. It really needs the attention that it deserves.

I want to take an opportunity to shout out to Lynda Muir, who leads the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie. She does a fantastic job, and, not only that, contributes to the community in so many other ways as well.

I can't stress how much I believe that there's absolutely no excuse; there's no religion, there's no culture that

can even remotely come close to excusing abuse of women or girls. There is absolutely no lower form of life, in my opinion, than someone who abuses a girl or woman, especially when they have a position of influence over them.

Anything we can do in this House to eradicate it and make it go away forever is commendable. Unfortunately, it's going to take a lot more than a motion to do it; it's going to take the will of the people in our communities, the will of all our organizations, whether they be churches or women and children's shelters, to work together to make sure that we eradicate any sort of violence against women and children and girls.

I fully support the motion; I'm happy to stand here and support it. I think it needs to start here. We're leaders in our communities, and we need to make sure we address this in a way that makes it explicitly obvious that this is something that we will not stand for, and we'll do everything in our power as an assembly, after we pass this motion, to eradicate it.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm very pleased to stand and have the opportunity to contribute to this very important debate and to speak on this motion, which states, just for the people at home, "Be it resolved that every member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unite to end violence against women and girls in all forms, by building awareness, better law enforcement and by encouraging more emphasis on coordinated community response."

I'd like to start off by saying that we need to do more than what this motion proposes. As a government and as a society, we need to stand up to all forms of violent behaviour and invest in strategies aimed at eliminating the root causes, not just actions that are designed to help when the pain has already been inflicted.

Today's private member's motion, however, fails to recognize or even address the ways that the system is letting women and families down. I'm probably going to be the negative ninny in the debate; I'm just throwing that out there. This is something that's very, very important to me and personal to me. I have been in receipt of these services that we're talking about, of women's shelters. My stepmother has dedicated her entire life to helping women in their time of need by running a women's shelter, and I know that we can and we need to do more.

The issue of the safety of women—of all members of society, particularly vulnerable sectors—is of paramount importance. I'm going to say it again, I'm going to be negative, but this government cannot hide behind a private member's motion. It needs to prioritize this issue and put it at the forefront. I know that there are people on the opposite side who think that this is an important issue, but we really need to do something about it.

Globally, one in three women will be the victim of sexual assault, and while conditions have improved, many women continue to experience discrimination,

barriers to employment, lack of affordable housing and child care, and lower wages than their male counterparts. These are all things that need to change.

The government needs to act now to implement the Step It Up! Campaign's 10 steps to end violence against women. It includes things like creating and maintaining more affordable housing and non-profit child care, providing fair access to justice for women, and providing secure funding for women's organizations. With all the accolades that have been mentioned, I think it's a reflection of the fact that these women's shelters, and these outstanding women and men who are helping, are doing it in spite of the lack of supports.

A very telling example of our failure to provide supports came during the recent pre-budget consultation meetings in Thunder Bay. Of just over 20 submissions, we had submissions from Red Lake's New Starts for Women shelter, Dryden's Hoshizaki House and second-stage housing shelter, and Faye Peterson Transition House shelter in Thunder Bay, all of whom were asking the province to provide them with very basic supports to help them provide services for abused and battered women and their families.

It has been more than a decade since any shelter in the northwest has received building funds. Many of these shelters, such as Hoshizaki House in Dryden, are literally crumbling to the ground, trying to exist in a building that's more than 100 years old. We lack basic supports such as affordable housing for women who have escaped violent relationships. In short, we're failing people who need the support the most.

I will support today's motion, but there's so much more that we need to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Grant Crack: I rise today not only to support my colleague from Mississauga-Brampton South, but to speak to and to support all the women in my personal life, my work environment, my riding, my province, my country and all over the world.

I take this opportunity to support the official United Nations International Women's Day 2013 theme: "A promise is a promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women." We stand to unite to end violence against women and girls today, knowing that we need to do this not just today, but every single day of every year.

In my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, we have groups of strong women that come together to help others who aren't so lucky, who aren't surrounded by a support system to help them get out of a potentially dangerous situation or to help them rebuild their lives.

J'ai eu le privilège de visiter à plusieurs reprises le Centre Novas, situé à Casselman. J'ai pu discuter avec la gérante, Anne Jutras, qui est très impliquée, ainsi que ses employées et son conseil d'administration, toutes des femmes bénévoles qui se tiennent au courant des réalités auxquelles font face beaucoup trop de femmes et filles locales. Elles font présentement la campagne « One Billion Rising ». Prescott-Russell dit non à la violence faite aux femmes.

Prevention and security are key elements to focus on when we try to better women's lives. We need to provide them with the tools to be able to heal, to create change and to move forward with the rebuilding of their lives. We also need to look at where the violence against women stems from and who is creating this violent and threatening environment for them.

We can no longer be silent when it comes to violence against women. We need to talk about it; we need to get involved. When one woman suffers, kids suffer, families suffer and communities suffer. Silence is not the answer. We need to come out of the silence to defend women, talk about who is violating them and talk about why men hurt women. Let's talk about what we can do to motivate them to stop controlling, stop demeaning, stop hurting, stop violating and even, in the extreme, taking a life. Everyone collectively needs to become an active partner in awareness, not only by telling women how to protect themselves, but by preventing violence against women in the first place.

We can no longer tolerate demeaning language, demeaning jokes. We can no longer tolerate actions that victimize and hurt a woman. I ask all Ontarians today to be positive role models. Let's start walking the talk. Please stand with us and help us put an end to violence toward women. It's in everyone's best interest.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I rise this afternoon to speak to the motion brought forward by the member from Mississauga–Brampton South. This motion proposes that members of this House unite to end violence against women and girls in all forms, and that we do so through better education and awareness, more effective and compassionate law enforcement, stronger community supports for those women who have suffered violence or abuse, and a coordinated community response.

I think that the last element is perhaps the most important. This is a struggle that requires all of us to be mindful of the world in which we live, and asks us to take action, whenever appropriate, to make a real difference in our communities and beyond. It is a struggle that will require sustained attention and determination.

Sadly, not a week goes by without us being reminded in some fresh and terrible way of the impact that violence has on the lives of millions of women across all social, economic and educational classes, and around the world. The fact that violence against women persists to such an outrageous degree is a discredit to civilization and, as I say, a significant social and cultural problem that poses a very serious threat to women and girls throughout the world.

From domestic abuse and rape, to human trafficking and female circumcision, violence crosses cultural and religious barriers, hindering the right of women to participate fully in society. And sadly, Ontario is not immune.

While there are some who have lived lives untouched by violence against women, the statistics suggest many

whose lives have been altered, or may yet be altered, by this ongoing problem. Every second, a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence. Nearly a third of Ontario women 18 years or older will experience some form of criminal violence. And with lifespans increasing, we're seeing abuse and assault carrying on well into old age.

These challenges won't be overcome overnight, but they can be overcome. This is a first step.

I want to commend the great work that Halton Women's Place does in Burlington.

It is important that victims of violence and those in the community who are committed to supporting victims know that their Legislature stands behind them. I'm happy to step up, and I look forward to the ongoing debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm just delighted to rise in support of the motion brought by my colleague and seatmate, the member for Mississauga–Brampton South. This is an incredibly important topic and, as has been said already, no community is immune.

The piece of this resolution that particularly appeals to me is the emphasis on a coordinated community response. This is exactly the approach that's being attempted in York region. In fact, in 2009 the York Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee was founded, including so many of the agencies that are involved in this whole issue of violence against women. They have estimated that in York region, a minimum of 7% are affected by violent abuse every year.

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I'd like to highlight just a couple of initiatives that this coordinating committee has been involved in. First of all, the Women's Centre of York Region has helped in the last year, in 2012, some 88 women who are victims of domestic abuse become self-employed. They've helped these women launch viable and sustainable businesses. They've been provided with the tools to regain confidence and build a more successful future for themselves and their families.

Another group—and they were here in the Legislature just recently. The Yellow Brick House has served some 5,500 abused women and children in York region through its shelter and outreach services just in 2012, and they've taken a very dynamic and proactive community approach to end violence against women. In 2012, through its Schools for Change program, Yellow Brick House targeted 250 students from grades 1 to 8. The program promotes the development of healthy relationships by providing students with the skills they need to have before they begin dating. Through games, group activities, videos and discussions, students learn to challenge gender-role stereotypes, communicate effectively and respectfully, and handle strong emotions in a positive and helpful way. In fact, the Yellow Brick House has been so successful that just last month they were awarded one of the Attorney General's Victim Services Awards.

This program with the students is one that should prove very important in the future. It has been piloted; it has been a great success, and we hope that with its preventive approach, women in York region will remain much safer than they are to date.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to stand and respect the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for her passion and her intuition or understanding of the issues you described. I listened to your remarks closely, and it is quite tragic. I'm a father of three daughters and two sons. My daughters—I often think of how I should be kinder to people myself. I always think of them because of the inappropriate—sometimes, when you're talking with a colleague or something, you may use more forceful language than when you're talking to someone else who isn't comfortable with that type of language. I would like to thank her for bringing this discussion forward.

I think it's right. I've heard my colleagues speak about it. The most important part is the education, the understanding, whether it's cultural, whether it's Canadian or anywhere. Violence in any form is completely unacceptable, and that is, I believe, where society is today. Certainly, I would respect that direction and that expected outcome, and I believe all colleagues here are supportive of the motion that you have brought forward.

What draws me to this more specifically is that just after I was elected, where my constituency office was, there was a young woman who was stabbed and killed just outside our office—just tragic. She was a bank teller at I think it was the National Bank at the time, and it was her estranged boyfriend who was really stalking her. Again, this is why I draw it to my daughters as well—they were about the same age at the time. That young woman's name was Jennifer Copithorn.

There was an inquest held from it, and it extended to many of the sentiments you'd expect here. How could she free herself of being pursued, threatened and intimidated—manipulated, really, about how to just neutralize the thing. When I looked through it, I talked to, at that time, the Attorney General for Ontario, who was Jim Flaherty. We tried to move a change of how to get a restraining order. This is very important, because at that very time, there was a very famous case; it's the Lori Dupont tragedy, where her estranged husband, a doctor, killed her right in the hospital itself. There was an inquest into that as well, and there were outcomes. What was missing: There was a bottleneck of how long it took to get a restraining order, because they had to get a judge. Maybe on the weekend they're not available. I'm not being critical of the judiciary system here. I want that understood.

I initiated a bill, and I called it the Lori Dupont Act. What it was is it allowed a member of the judiciary, be it a judge or a justice of the peace, to be available for issuing a restraining order 24/7—a reasonable regulatory change. Somehow or another, this provision has never been implemented. It may be symbolic, but it is symbolic

at this time, and I think your colleagues, whether it's the Attorney General or other members of cabinet who I see here are listening, need to make sure that's available to access.

Is that going to solve the problem of some of these stalkers and manipulators? No. When I look at the outcome in Cleveland for those three women who were, at the time, I believe they were—I just was reading the article—14 years of age or something like that, whose lives and the lives of their loved ones have been completely altered and shattered by this position of power or lack of understanding or respect for others.

On that, I commend you for bringing this forward. It's important that we all share some outcomes from this discussion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Brampton South for bringing this important motion forward today.

As I sat in the chamber today, I spent some time thinking about the very first volunteer role that I ever played: working on yardwork outside of a women's shelter. At the time, I thought very much about the fact that I didn't really know the lives of the women and the children that were inside that building, and that if we could only know and understand, more would be mobilized. I guess that is why I'm so proud that the member from Mississauga–Brampton South has brought this conversation to the floor of the Legislature, because we do need to talk about it.

One of my favourite quotes is from Michelle Bachelet. She's the former executive director of UN Women, and she says it so clearly and concisely: "There is nothing excusable about violence against women and girls anywhere, at any time. Nothing." It is clear and concise. It makes us understand the steps that we all have to take.

I want to just remind those in this Legislature of the steps we have taken as a government. We have put forward a Domestic Violence Action Plan and a Sexual Violence Action Plan. Bill 13 has brought in initiatives into our schools to make sure that they are safe and accepting. We now have a gender studies course starting this September.

Many initiatives that have been undertaken, such as investments in terms of a 49% increase in the funding to domestic violence, the addition of new shelter beds, micro-lending programs for women, the training of front-line workers, new initiatives in the court and justice system—all those things remind us that this is a complex issue, and there is always more to do.

If we start by taking that personal responsibility—each and every one of us in our lives, in our communities, in our families—to recognize that we need to talk about this, we need to pull those curtains open on the lives of women and children in a shelter and say that we can all be part of that solution and find the solution. I think we will be better off for it.

I'm proud that our government has been acknowledged as a leader in Canada when it comes to the issue

of domestic violence. We've been acknowledged in that regard by the British Columbia government in the BC report, when they examined issues in their province.

But all that to say: There is more to do. Part of doing more of that work is talking to our children, talking to our friends and neighbours, being open to the realities of women's and children's lives. When we do that, Speaker, we will all be very proud of the positive impact we will have on the lives of women and children in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga–Brampton South, you have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to thank the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Parkdale–High Park; the government House leader; the members from Barrie, Kenora–Rainy River, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Burlington, Oak Ridges–Markham, Durham; and the minister responsible for women's issues for participating in this debate about this important issue.

We have all read or heard the shocking news about what happened to the three innocent women in Cleveland: forcible detention, rape and torture for over a decade. Violence against women is not something new; it has deep-seated roots. It's an evil which must end. It cannot end without vigorous action at all levels of government and a coordinated community response all over the world.

I would also like to acknowledge the work done by Catholic Family Services of Peel and Dufferin in my region. They are doing outstanding work. They deal with violence against women all the time on an everyday basis.

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In my response to the members from Kenora–Rainy River and Parkdale–High Park, I think this side of the government has done a lot of work. We have brought the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and we have introduced the Ontario Child Benefit. This side of the benches and the government have brought affordable long-term housing. Yes, there is more to do. There is always room for improvement. Let's work together to end this heinous crime.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

Ms. Wong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Projet de loi 53, Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to begin my remarks this afternoon by acknowledging four individuals who have contributed to the creation of Bill 53. First, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin Elman, has worked tirelessly since the inception of the provincial advocate position. Mr. Elman has been a true champion of children and youth in this province. He has earned the trust and respect of children and youth across Ontario. Second, Deb Deller, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, supported and welcomed the youth who attended the 2011 Youth Leaving Care hearings at Queen's Park. Third, I want to recognize the current Minister of Children and Youth Services for her leadership in initiating Bill 90 last year and now Bill 53. Finally, I also want to acknowledge the former Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Eric Hoskins, for his leadership in implementing some of the recommendations from the My Real Life Book report.

It is widely known that children and youth in and from care felt that they weren't listened to. Yet through their courage and determination, these same youth ensured that their issues and voices were heard at the Ontario Legislature at the 2011 Youth Leaving Care hearings.

As I present Bill 53 to the Legislature, I would like to provide some historical context of the children and youth living under the care of the crown and the children's aid societies of Ontario. On November 18 and 25, 2011, the Legislature held the Youth Leaving Care hearings and listened to the stories, songs, poetry and even dances of the children and youth who were currently or were previously under care. These amazing and courageous young people spoke from their hearts and shared many difficult stories that often brought tears to the eyes of the audience, special guests, youth panellists and government officials. There were over 300 people who attended the hearing on the first day, and over 500 people attended on the second day. I can still remember vividly some of the stories that were shared with me during the first day of hearings.

The hearings were the first of their kind in Canada, as young people in and from care held the first public hearings here in Queen's Park. I was very pleased to see that the hearings team provided a variety of youth-friendly support and encouraged young people to participate in these hearings. The submissions came in audio, video, art, songs, dance and even poetry. A total of 183 submissions were sent in from across Ontario.

The youth hearings team reviewed and organized their report, titled *My Real Life Book*, under six themes: "We are vulnerable," "We are isolated," "We are left out of our lives," "No one is really there for us," "Care is unpredictable," "Care ends and we struggle." I read this report and found it quite challenging to read at times, as the stories and artwork came from the hearts of young people in this province. I want to acknowledge the youth hearings team and all the witnesses for their bravery and

their perseverance in preparing the report, which was tabled in the Legislature by the former Minister of Children and Youth Services on May 14, 2012.

I was very pleased to see Minister Hoskins take immediate action on the number one recommendation in the My Real Life Book report by creating a working group comprised of youth with experience living in care, along with partners from across Ontario, with the direction of determining how best to ensure a stronger voice for youth themselves as we move forward with improvements to the child welfare system.

I understand that in their response to this submission, this government formed a 15-person working group. The working group included eight youth members and one alternate to provide expertise from a range of lived experiences in the care of the Ontario child welfare system, and seven members with strong knowledge on the needs of children and youth, from youth service organizations. The working group successfully developed a blueprint to help put recommendations from the Youth Leaving Care hearings into action.

One important recommendation that came out of the My Real Life Book report was to declare Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario, which is what Bill 53 does. By declaring May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario, we move one step further in helping to raise awareness, reducing the stigma and recognizing children and youth in care. Having a dedicated Children and Youth in Care Day would also keep the issues affecting the lives of children and youth in care in the public spotlight, and provide regular updates on the Action Plan for Fundamental Change.

The creation of Children and Youth in Care Day is widely supported across Ontario. The provincial advocate, Irwin Elman, stated: "The hearings demonstrated just how invisible children in care are to many in the province. A day each year on the anniversary of the release of the groundbreaking My Real Life Book report will allow all Ontarians to celebrate the children who we have made a commitment to through our child welfare agencies, and take stock of how we're doing in parenting them. Passage of this private member's bill is a significant statement of respect and support on the part of the Legislature to children in care."

Kenn Richard, executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, stated that Bill 53 "stands as a reminder of our collective responsibility in the provision of quality care to children—children to whom we are not just legally but morally obligated to recognize as having a special relationship to the people of this province. Passing this bill can serve not only as a testament of our obligations under the law but as a continued reminder of the sacredness of such obligations."

Bill Bevan, the CEO of Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, said with Bill 53 we will "see a day specifically dedicated to youth in care and look forward to seeing that the Action Plan for Fundamental Change is a government priority and that this plan reflects what youth are saying they need to not only survive but thrive."

David Rivard, the CEO of Children's Aid Society of Toronto, stated that "the passing of the bill would formally establish a day that recognizes the children and youth in care in Ontario's 47 children's aid societies is one that CAS Toronto strongly supports. We see regularly how the challenges and stigma of being in care can affect children and youth. Having a dedicated day for us to be able to not only raise awareness of the needs of these children but also to highlight the collective responsibility we all have to ensuring their successful futures would be an important milestone."

Mr. Speaker, all members of this Legislature owe our utmost respect and support to the children and youth under our care. It is important to us all that each of these youth reaches their full potential. We all know that youth in care are often disadvantaged, and most vulnerable. We need to work to ensure that they are successful in their transition into adulthood, in terms of student success and employment, and that they receive timely emotional support.

I'm very proud of the actions taken to date by our government to address and support children and youth in care. Let me share with this House some of the initiatives that we have undertaken.

We now allow 16- or 17-year-olds who have left care to return to a CAS and be eligible for financial and other support until the age of 21. Children's aid societies continue to provide support to youth, both emotionally and financially, from ages 18 to 21 through the Extended Care and Maintenance program.

Our government provides a range of support to encourage more youth in and leaving care to pursue post-secondary studies or vocational training, including grants for tuition, reimbursements for application fees; champion teams that provide direct supports to current or former crown wards; and OSAP exemptions for Extended Care and Maintenance. Through the Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent, we have increased their access to educational, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and savings when they leave care. Our government has introduced RESPs for children and youth in care to support planning to pursue post-secondary education and training. We have also increased adoptions and have helped more young people find permanent homes. The legislative and policy changes made in recent years have resulted in fewer children and youth coming into care; more of them are now placed in permanent homes. Today, there are currently over 17,000 in care; 7,500 of them are crown wards.

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Although our government has made major improvements, there is still more to be done, Mr. Speaker. I hope that by proclaiming May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day, we will continue to raise awareness and keep the issues that affect the lives of children and youth in care in the public spotlight. This is what Bill 53 is designed to do. I'm very pleased to reintroduce Bill 53, formerly Bill 90, into the Legislature. As a registered nurse and a former public school trustee, I had the

pleasure of meeting and working with many at-risk children and youth. These young people truly show us their strength, courage and resilience.

The My Real Life Book report captures the lived experiences, memories, achievements, challenges and hopes of our young people for the future. As legislators, we have a responsibility and obligation to ensure that we not only just listen but also act on the recommendations made by the young people who participated in the Youth Leaving Care hearings.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to share a quote from Justine, aged 25, former youth in care. She said, "We are, after all, your children, Ontario." Every member of this House is a parent to over 17,000 children in care. As parents, let us collectively transform our once-vulnerable, isolated, left out, uncared-for and struggling young people into strong, vibrant, successful and contributing young leaders in our communities.

I want to thank all my colleagues in advance who will be speaking about Bill 53, and I look forward to their support and the passage of Bill 53, important legislation on Ontario children and youth. Remember: May 14 is next week. We should do the right thing, and the right thing is passing the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome James McGuirk, who is a children and youth advocate at the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and the youth here today. I'll be sharing my time today with the members for Durham, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry and Barrie, Speaker.

Thank you to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for bringing this legislation back again. First introduced a year ago as Bill 90, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act names May 14 of each year in recognition of the experience and contributions of Ontario's roughly 8,000 children and youth in care.

This legislation was inspired by the Youth Leaving Care hearings, when youth in care or who were leaving care voiced their concerns about the province's child welfare system to the policy-makers. The significance of May 14 is that it was on May 14 of last year that the Youth Leaving Care Hearings Team delivered its report to the previous Minister of Children and Youth Services. That report inspired this legislation; it was a recommendation of the youth hearings team.

Drawn from first-hand, front-line experience, the report doesn't paint a very rosy picture of the state of children and youth in Ontario today, Speaker. Immediately apparent are the barriers in a system that can be impersonal and at some times dehumanizing. These young people move around so often they are unable to undergo the emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual growth that most of our young people take for granted. These young people are inspiring and possess exceptional strength and ambition, which is even more remarkable when you consider how much the odds are stacked against them.

We need to ensure that we have policies in place that give children and youth in care the tools to succeed. Among other things, participants of the Youth Leaving Care hearings told us that they felt invisible, isolated and anonymous. Creating Children and Youth in Care Day would give us all a chance to address those criticisms and have discussions that can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable Ontarians. It says to youth in care that we recognize their challenges and celebrate their achievements.

If there is a criticism of the bill, it's that this is essentially an awareness day. It's not a solution so much as it is an opportunity to wrestle with the bigger issues and trigger conversations, and it's important that this government walks the talk.

Here's one example. We've seen children's aid societies in the news in recent weeks and there has been a lot of concern about the government's apparent lack of engagement with agencies who are being asked to adopt to a new funding formula. The agencies are being left out in the cold, and the young people they serve can't help but be impacted by that.

In this Legislature, the current minister and her predecessor have both acknowledged the government's obligation to manage change without compromising quality or care, and on that, I think we all agree. Systemic change, however necessary it is, should not negatively impact the core mission of protecting children and youth.

As PC critic for children and youth, I would call on this government to honour children and youth in care, not just by decreeing a spring day in their name but by devoting ourselves every day to making their lives better and their futures brighter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will also be sharing my time today, with the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

I am also pleased to be standing in the House today in support of Bill 53, a bill to enact Children and Youth in Care Day on May 14 of each year. This bill comes from a recommendation made from the Youth Leaving Care hearings, and we have some of our youth here with us today. I am so proud of the work they do, and congratulations to all of them.

This is another piece of legislation that we could have been celebrating this month, and actually, next week. Unfortunately, the Liberal government prorogued this House and now leaves us beginning this process here today. This was the point where I was going to welcome and congratulate our youth, as well as our provincial advocate, Irwin Elman, and his team for all of the great work they do to make sure that they're bringing forward recommendations to ensure that we are strengthening our system for youth in care.

The Youth Leaving Care hearings were held here at Queen's Park in November 2011. From those hearings came a report, My Real Life Book, and from their recommendation came a working group—the Blueprint

for Fundamental Change to Ontario's Child Welfare System. They are both amazing, well-put-together reports, both filled with changes that are needed within our system to ensure that we, as responsible legislators who are elected by our communities, get it right.

These reports are filled with recommendations, one being to declare Children and Youth in Care Day, as we are speaking of today, but this is just low-hanging fruit. Let's look at the top priority recommendations that came from the final report of the Youth Leaving Care Working Group's blueprint for change.

It is essential and urgent that:

- every child and every youth in and from care has permanent lifelong relationships that meet their personal and cultural needs;

- children and youth have stable homes;

- children's aid societies work to find permanency for every child or youth through return to the family home, kinship placements, formal customary care, adoption or legal custody;

- children's aid societies provide the supports that parents and other caregivers need to keep children and youth in their homes;

- children's aid societies' boards of directors make permanency a key goal of their organization;

- children in youth and care grow up with many opportunities to develop permanent, supportive relationships with caregivers, staff, community members and extended family.

So, if we look at these top recommendations, let's take the opportunity of Children and Youth in Care Day, even before it is passed, to question how close we are to meeting these recommendations.

When it comes to these issues of high priority, and we see the current crisis in CAS funding, it's going to prevent us from actually making these a reality.

This morning, I met yet again with representatives of the children's aid society. They told me, as I and this government have been told before, that the cuts that are coming will make it impossible for them to fulfill this mandate, and while this government has basically said that these cuts are not their problem, the fact of the matter is that children and youth in care are vulnerable, and the vulnerable coming into care are the ones who are going to be hurt.

1440

Let me tell the House about a few cuts that are known, just in Hamilton.

- A family management program to deal with older children: Currently, there are 90 families who are being serviced by this, with 47 on the wait-list. This program will no longer exist. This is a program to keep families together.

- A parent support program for young children: Currently, 110 families are receiving services, with 30 on the wait-list. This is going to be cut to the bare bones.

- Get Connected, a program that helps St. Martin's Manor—they deal with young mothers and babies—will continue to exist with significantly reduced resources.

- Reduction and elimination of health and dental services, which includes our Healthy Babies program.

So many other good things are also going to be cut down to nothing. Services are going to be completely cut out.

These are only a few of the cuts to our front-line services that will affect our youth in care. These are the services that are meant to keep our families together and our youth at home with their families.

Every day, MPPs have a responsibility to take into account how well we are treating our children and youth in care. This crisis is going to affect our children in communities right across our province. Let's take today as an opportunity to commit to addressing this crisis before children lose permanency, access to medical services and many other services that are on the chopping block today.

As I said, today we take that step forward on the recommendations of this report. I will support recognizing May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day—and help Ontarians recognize and appreciate children and youth in care.

It will help raise awareness and help keep the bigger issues in the spotlight. On May 14 each year, we will be reminded of the report and the recommendations within it, but we have a lot of work ahead of us. It is our duty to meet these expectations, desires and, more importantly, the needs of our children and youth in care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's a real delight to be up and speaking to this. Prior to my current appointment, it was a real honour and privilege to serve as the parliamentary assistant for children and youth services to the former Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Eric Hoskins. I thoroughly enjoyed working on that file and continue to follow it with great interest.

There are over 17,000 children and youth in care in Ontario, of whom 7,500 are crown wards. In November 2011, as referenced by other speakers, many of these youth came down to Queen's Park and held the Youth Leaving Care hearings. There were many heartfelt stories told at those hearings. We heard honest stories and learned about the challenges facing youth who are in care and the ones who leave care.

One of the most important issues raised at these hearings was the need to tackle some of the stigma related to growing up in care. As a government, we should be helping to raise awareness and, indeed, support our youth in care. I know that in my own riding of Pickering-Scarborough East, I have enjoyed meeting with both the Durham and Scarborough children's aid societies to talk about the challenges, issues and opportunities faced by those organizations. I must say too that I'm very impressed with the dedication of all the employees in those children's aid societies who are dedicated to the very important work they do.

In proclaiming May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day, we will be taking an important step. It will also help

recognize the importance of front-line youth workers who make a difference in the lives of some of Ontario's most vulnerable youth each day. I want to thank and congratulate my colleague the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for taking this initiative and bringing forward the bill, and I look forward to its quick passage in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an honour and a privilege, because very infrequently do I get the chance to participate in debates. But I made it a point, because as a parent as well as a constituent-type person—I think that being a parent of five children qualifies me in some respects as having youth in care. I'm not trivializing this. Every child is special.

Now, what is a determinant of outcomes, to a very large extent, is environmental. There are studies that would conclude that the richer your environment, the more opportunities will be available to you. If you take a young person specifically who hasn't had the opportunity, for a lot of reasons, often that affects their culturalization or their formation as a person, their reference points. They may be gifted children in art, music, theatre or whatever—the entertainment part of the community as well; that never get discovered. I quite honestly see in my own riding where—I'm going to bring one case, because I have very limited time. I have to share it fairly with people, unless, of course, I could have unanimous consent for more time.

What I've got in my riding—I'll give you one example. I'm going to mention it. New Heights is a youth detention centre. They receive children in care from CAS. Right now, the strategy by the province is to integrate these into communities. In fairness, it's a two-way street. In this case, they integrated it into a community that has already got some issues. The neighbours find out that they've got youth in care there, young people who are hard to treat and hard to service, coming from Toronto, primarily, and they're acting out to gain control.

Now the neighbours are freaking out. They've never been told that this is a group home. I think that's completely unacceptable. It's hard on the children as well, the young people who are being treated like they're a blight on the community. They could be the kids next door who have issues. Do you understand? But because it's a group home, nobody knows and all of a sudden there's this stuff going on there, the cars coming and going and the police, so it's very, very bad.

I did speak with a staff sergeant a couple of times. I spoke with the neighbours, one of the local councillors in the community. At the end of it, it comes down to educating the people first. I think the municipality has a role so that they're not dropping and parachuting these children into a situation that's going to make it worse for them.

I have others that are involved in violent things in another group home in the north part of my riding, which

I won't mention. They're ones that present a risk to the community. But these are all negative connotations for the youth itself, and this bill is trying to bring some respect to that by celebrating a day. The conversation needs to start with educating the people. These should not be treated as if they're not citizens like the rest of us because they're serving some kind of a court decision, I guess. Youth are going to grow up and we should treat them kindly, but the situations often, as I've described, in my experience, are bad for them from the very start.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and speak to Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act. If passed, this bill would proclaim May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day. It is hoped that by proclaiming this day, we will be provided with an opportunity to recognize the contributions current and former crown and society wards make to the province, while raising awareness of the supports and programs we need to provide to ensure that these individuals can reach their full potential.

The idea for this day stems from a report made by the Youth Leaving Care Hearings Team, and I am pleased to lend my support to this initiative, because we need to do everything that we can to ensure children in care receive the same opportunities for success that other children in our province receive.

The need for support is evident in the statistics. Just 44% of youth in care graduate high school, compared to 81% for the general population. That's almost a success rate of half. Forty-three per cent of homeless youth have had some interaction with the child welfare system, and many go through life feeling as though they're commodities, being shifted from house to house, feeling unwanted, unloved, and desperately seeking something that feels like a normal relationship with a caring family. Even when paired with caring and loving families, these children still face challenges that others simply do not.

Presently in Ontario, there are almost 17,000 children in the care of the children's aid societies. Of those, 8,300 are crown wards or children who are in foster care who do not and likely will not have access to their natural family.

1450

As the NDP critic for aboriginal affairs, I would like to take a moment to focus on a particularly disturbing trend that is especially important in the north, and that is with First Nations children within the child welfare system. Some 17% of the children involved in the child welfare system are aboriginal, despite making up only 3% of the general population. Many of these children are pulled out of their home communities, taken away from their culture, their heritage, and they feel a particularly strong sense of displacement. Despite many expressing concerns about the damage that pulling these children out of their home communities causes, it continues to happen. Sadly, it's not unlike the now-condemned residential

school system, where children were taken away from their close-knit communities and forced to adapt to a completely different culture, different language and different lifestyle.

Many of you may not be aware, but First Nations communities are very close-knit. When they lose a community member, the entire community mourns and feels that loss. And in many respects, when a child is taken out of a First Nations home, the entire community feels that loss. There are many who are saying that we need to take real and meaningful steps to find ways to ensure that these children can stay in their home communities.

The situation isn't getting any better with prescription drug abuse reaching epidemic levels in many communities across the north. One of the greatest contributions we can make to the quality of life of children in care and children at risk of being in care is to battle the social injustices that are happening in these communities. We can improve the situation in these communities and prevent future generations from turning to drugs and alcohol to cope with despair by investing in basic community needs such as schools, libraries, recreation facilities and housing, and by helping to promote and protect First Nations language and culture.

Many of the parents who have had their children taken away were exposed to drugs and alcohol as a way of coping with the desperation, boredom, desolation and hopelessness that all exist within communities that aren't provided with the basic necessities exist, and even more have turned to these outlets to cope with the demons of a residential school system that left them permanently scarred and without the family experience that is needed to raise families of their own.

What I'm saying is that if we don't take meaningful steps to support children in care, the cycle will keep repeating itself. Today's bill is one of a number of steps that need to be taken to support our youth, and I'm hopeful that other actions and initiatives will be forthcoming to ensure that nobody is a victim of circumstance, that all children are given equal opportunities and that we close the gaps that exist between children in care and the general population. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 53, brought forward by the member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

I think it's a bill that we should all get behind, because it's going to do something that I think we really need to do. That is, today, if you ask most Ontarians if they were aware that we had youth in care and about some of the problems that they were undergoing on a daily basis, I think the vast majority of Ontarians would say, "I know very little about that." What this bill proposes to do is to remind them that there are some young people who are struggling in our society to form a life for themselves, and it's about time that we paid a little bit more attention to them.

I spent 12 years of my life on the board of directors of the Halton Children's Aid Society—three of those years

were as president—and I had the good fortune to serve on the board of directors under three governments: under the NDP, under the Liberals and the Conservatives. Let me tell you, Speaker: No one is going to heaven based on what they've done for crown wards in the province of Ontario to date. We can do much better than that, and I think it's an issue we can all get behind together on.

I'd like to thank Irwin Elman for the work that he has done on behalf of young people in this province to make sure that politicians and people in general understand that there are some things we can do better.

When I was serving on the board, post-secondary education for a crown ward was just a pipe dream. It simply was not going to happen. I think it was during the NDP government that things got so bad that we ended up forming the Halton children's aid foundation in order to provide those extras: scholarships, bursaries, things that enabled young people to form a life for themselves.

Today, I think we've come a long way. We still have a ways to go. The Halton children's aid foundation is flourishing. It's providing bursaries and scholarships. The government is providing OSAP exemptions and tuition grants. It seems to me that this is an issue whose time has come. The member is asking us to pass a bill that will take effect on May 14, which is only a few days away. I suggest that we all support this bill and we pass it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise to speak to Bill 53 and to recognize the contribution and the struggle of current and former crown wards and the wards of children's aid societies and to help raise awareness for the importance of providing support and helping them reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of getting to know a number of these deserving children in my community of South Glengarry. Danny, a friend of my son Bernie, was a ward of the local children's aid society. Throughout his years at Iona Academy elementary school and Char-Lan District High School, I had the opportunity to coach Danny in soccer and get to know him. He was a great athlete, sportsman, a great student and someone who you were very happy to bring into your son's life. He has gone on to complete post-secondary school and is now contributing to society.

I know it was not easy for Danny, but with the help of his foster parents he was able to enjoy some of the joys of childhood that we believe should be available to all people growing up in Ontario. An awareness day is just a start.

I would like to commend the people of the various organizations, such as the children's aid society, that try to make a difference in the lives of children such as Danny. Diane and Hans Von Bornhoft for many years served as foster parents for Danny and for many other children in our community. I got to know them through their volunteer roles at the local schools as well as their roles in volunteering in minor soccer. Recently they were

recognized for their relentless work at the children's aid society.

Another deserving individual is John Jans, who I got to know through pickup hockey, the local volunteer fire department, and his work in the children's aid society. John put many hours into preparing potential foster parents for the challenging role of sponsoring young foster children. John was a very busy person with his work life and countless hours of volunteering. I remember him telling me how potential parents actually withdrew from the program once they found out how big a commitment it was.

I want to again reinforce the need for these organizations and the volunteers who work so hard for them—and to the children who grow up without the benefit of caring natural parents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want on the record to say of course we'll support the motion. This is a "motherhood and apple pie" type of issue. I know the member is well-intended, so I don't mean to make this a swipe. But I come from a part of the world, like many of you that deal with the issue of children in care, and children that are supported by their children's aid societies—and specifically for Payukotayno, which is the agency that represents our families on the James Bay coast. They have been going through an epidemic of suicide and attempted suicides in those communities. Just this year, or I should say the beginning of last year, the government took away the \$2 million that we had secured for them in order to have an initiative to help combat and try to reduce the attempted suicides in those communities.

So yes, we'll support this motion, but what we need is a government to actually put in place a plan that is funded that deals with issues that affect children and to essentially make sure that we follow up on those things and continue to do so in a much more meaningful manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by welcoming everybody in the gallery.

I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 53, to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day on May 14 of each year. I'd also like to start by thanking everybody who has spoken to this bill.

One of the most powerful human emotions is a parent's instinct to protect and cherish their child. The classics and legends in every culture are full of stories of a mother's love or a father's sacrifice. Surely each of us in this House knows someone in our own families, parents who make sacrifices every day of their lives to give their children a better life. And yet we also know heartbreaking stories of children abandoned, ill-treated or hurt by those who are supposed to love them, care for them and protect them—stories of horrific abuse that are difficult to hear and read about. The lucky among these abused children are rescued. The unluckiest of them

suffer years of abuse silently, sometimes dying at the hands of their own parents.

1500

Using the word "lucky" for those who are removed from abusive parents or guardians is a relative term, and that's because while the state has nothing but the best interests for these children, the truth is that nothing can substitute a mother's love or a father's reassuring hug. It is difficult to imagine what it is like to move from foster home to foster home, to see another child being hugged by a father and feel the sting of tears, the loneliness and the sense of despair of being rejected. Yet many of these crown wards, despite such tragic and difficult childhoods, show a resilience difficult to fathom, rebuild a life for themselves and go on to become adults and good citizens.

This day is a tribute to their strength, their resilience, and is much needed. I hope every member in this House will find it in themselves to support this initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's an honour to stand here again and speak to this bill. I was proud to speak to it when it was introduced last session as well.

We still have a long way to go, as has been noted by many here in this chamber today. Studies show that young people—and young people tell us that when crown wards transition out of care, they don't do as well as other adults. They're less likely to finish high school, less likely to pursue post-secondary education and less likely to even earn a living wage. They're more likely than their peers to spiral into homelessness, poverty, mental health issues and challenges with the justice system.

This doesn't need to be this way. It's unacceptable, and we must work to change this in any way we can. It's time we address these changes head-on, and this bill, Bill 53, I think is a great start. It's one important step in creating dialogue with youth and fostering awareness that can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable Ontarians that we represent.

Creating a day to recognize these youth affirms our commitment to them. It recognizes the additional struggles they go through to achieve things we sometimes take for granted in our own lives, and celebrates their achievements—and there are many. Youth are the future of Ontario. Their well-being should be the utmost priority for all of us not only in the province, but certainly and especially in this House. We must ensure that every youth has the advantage to succeed in life, every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Irwin Elman, as many people have mentioned here today, and former youth in care had great hearings and a great report that was very touching.

Many people here know I have a very personal experience with how well these kids can do when they're given an opportunity to succeed. Anything we can do to place these opportunities in front of them, we need to take advantage of. Whether it's by chance or whether it's by design, it's up to us to try to make this happen. Right

now we have an opportunity not to let chance take over, but to actually do it by design. Let's seize that opportunity.

This is a great starting point, a great bill, but we have a lot further to go to make sure these kids get an equal opportunity to excel and be productive members of our community. They can do it, but they need our help to get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly going to be supporting Bill 53, brought forward by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt. I think we've heard it's a very important bill—it's very important to the kids—and I think we owe it to them to move this forward.

I find that when we have a bill like this, there's always an opportunity to look in our own community and find out a little bit more about the situation. I was most interested to find out a little bit more about the activities of the York Region Children's Aid Society. In 2012, they in fact served 6,147 families and they were supported by an amazing number of volunteers, some 213 volunteers, who actually provided and donated over 20,000 hours of service. I would like to thank these volunteers for the work that they've done. One of the things they did was apparently drive children and youth in care a total of over a million kilometres to various events. So we're getting wonderful community support.

Having said that, I think we're also very aware of the funding challenges of children's aid societies. In York region, with our rapidly growing population, funding has not kept pace. I know the members on this side of the House, those of us who represent York region, have advocated with Ministers of Children and Youth Services, and I'm very reassured that the new funding formula is going to be coming into force and that additional assistance will be there.

I think we have said, and we know, that every child and youth deserves to feel that they are cared for and loved, and as elected members of this House it's our duty to support these children and youth and to ensure they meet their full potential.

This is a very simple, short bill asking for one day a year to acknowledge the struggles that these children and youth face, and this will go some way towards education, awareness and reducing the stigma about children and youth in care. May 14 is only six days away. I understand a kickoff is planned at 9 a.m. Let's not make these children and youth wait. Let's do the right thing and pass this bill through second and third reading today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak to this private member's bill, Bill 53, brought by my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

First of all, I want to thank the youth for being here today, and it's my hope that we pass this very simple, short bill today.

As the member for Brampton West, I'm proud of this government's commitment to assisting Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. In November 2011, we heard directly from youth in care. They came here to Queen's Park and told their stories. They told us of their unique challenges and asked us for help. I'm pleased to say this government has listened. We enacted a series of reforms that will help our children and youth in care and leaving care to succeed. Yet we must do more to tackle the stigma and raise awareness.

I commend my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt for bringing this issue forward. By recognizing May 14 each year as Children and Youth in Care Day, this Legislature will be taking an important step forward in eliminating the stigmas related to those who grow up as crown wards and in the care of children's aid societies. This is also an opportunity to celebrate the many successful youth who have left care and gone on to live meaningful lives and have positive impacts on our society.

Finally, this official day each year will also remind us of the fantastic work done by our caregivers, foster parents and youth workers. These individuals work on the front line and make a big difference in the lives of these vulnerable young people each day. To these committed Ontarians I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation.

I fully support Bill 53 and encourage all of my colleagues from both sides of the House to join me and vote in favour of this very important initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt for a response.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members from Burlington and Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Consumer Services, and the members from Oakville, Brampton West, Mississauga East-Cooksville, Oak Ridges-Markham, Durham—who is a grandfather—Kenora-Rainy River, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Timmins-James Bay, and Barrie.

The bill is here to support young people, and this is what it's all about. I'm very thrilled to see so many members of the House supporting young people. We're here as a Legislature to ensure that every young person in Ontario is being heard.

I want to share, Mr. Speaker—normally, I don't pull out my BlackBerry. I just received an email from a constituent, but also a youth, telling us, "We are extremely grateful to you for putting forth this very important private member's bill. This means a great day to us and across the province. We hope that it can be proclaimed."

So at the end of the day, we need to look upon, each one of us, why this bill is before us, because we need to listen; we need to listen to the recommendations, and we need to act. As my colleague the member from Oak Ridges-Markham just said, next week is May 14, and it is the right thing to do, to deal with this bill.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to make a comment to the member that the use of

electronic devices is not permitted in the House, but I did not want to interrupt your final comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: Sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' business.

ALZHEIMER ADVISORY
COUNCIL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF
DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER

Mrs. Cansfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia / Projet de loi 54, Loi créant le Conseil consultatif de la maladie d'Alzheimer et élaborant une stratégie de traitement et de prévention de la maladie d'Alzheimer et d'autres formes de démence et de recherche en la matière.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: First and foremost, I would like to thank my co-sponsor of the bill, the member from Whitby-Oshawa. I'm eternally grateful for her support.

This is the third time I've had this bill in front of the House, and some people ask me, why? So let me share a little bit of information, just as we start, before I get into some of the nuts and bolts of what I'd like to speak about.

Looking at the relative percentage of seniors in the province's adult population, it has actually increased over time, reaching 17% in just 2008-09. The absolute number, the oldest seniors, those aged 85-plus, have grown by 36%. If you take that data and you look at it today, our own finance ministry has indicated that the people who are aged 65-plus will double from 1.9 million or 14.2% of the population to 4.2 million or 23.6% of the population by 2036. So, what particular difference would that make and why would we be interested?

In Ontario today, nearly 200,000 Ontarians over the age of 65—that's one in 10 seniors—have dementia. That's an increase of over 16% in the last four years. By 2020, which is just around the corner, a quarter of a million seniors in Ontario will be living with dementia.

What is dementia? It's a term used to describe a syndrome that could be caused by a number of illnesses in which there is a progressive decline in multiple areas of function, such as a decline in memory, reasoning, communication skills and the ability to carry out daily activities. This was a definition from Michael Stones, September 28, 2010.

Individuals can develop behavioural and psychological symptoms, agitation, aggression. They can wander, they can shout, they can repeat the questioning. They

have sleep disturbances. They have depression and they have psychoses. According to Mr. Stones, in Ontario, older people with dementia were prescribed anti-psychotic drugs—between 2000-07 from 1.1% to 1.8% of the whole of the age of 65-plus, roughly 25% of all people with dementia.

Why should that be of any consideration to us? Why should we deal with the fact that anti-psychotic drugs are being used in our long-term-care homes or by people with dementia? Because they are prescribed more once individuals are in the homes. I think it is particularly important that roughly 25% of those people receiving those anti-psychotic prescriptions—41.8% were over the age of 85 and 70.5% were in nursing or long-term-care homes. For those not admitted using the same medication, nearly 25% received that medication once they were admitted to a long-term-care home. Indeed, about 25% of all residents in long-term care and patients with complex continuing care in Ontario receive anti-psychotic drugs.

What is this drug and what is its use? It's a medication that's given to control symptoms of dementia in elderly patients, such as wandering and aggression. But this drug is not without its significant problems. It has some very serious cerebrovascular side effects, including strokes. Actually, the FDA in the United States spoke to these adverse events and mortality. In fact, they have an increase of 1.7% in a randomized control—actually said it increased the rate of death by people using these drugs by 1.7%.

Interestingly enough, in the United Kingdom in 2009, Professor Sube Banerjee reported to the Minister of State that, in fact, they have the same problem in the United Kingdom. They are dealing with the challenges of dementia, and they are going to have to find ways and means to be able to support these challenges that are going on within.

When he looked at it, he also spoke to what was happening in Ontario. This is a particular comment that I think really resonates well with me. The report goes on to say, "What is worrisome in a Canadian context seems to me to be a cultural apathy toward the problem not just within the health care system but also in wider society. With a health care system perceived to be under some threat, who dares criticize or to relabel accepted practice as systemic abuse?"

I think that's something all of us should be quite concerned about. Why do I say this? I'll go on and quote from Paula Rochon from Baycrest on improving the pharmaceutical care of older adults, who indicated, in a series of studies on the use and impact of antipsychotic drugs that are used to manage behavioural problems associated with dementia, that these therapies have the potential for serious adverse events including drug-induced Parkinson's, falls, stroke and death.

The research found that almost one in four elderly Ontario patients started treatment on antipsychotic therapy within a year of admission to a nursing home. I repeat that: almost one in four within a year. At the same time, the use of these drugs among the community-dwelling elderly was also increasing. These drugs are expensive,

and we are one of the highest developed countries in the use of drugs among the elderly—in fact, in our society as a whole.

The Law Commission of Ontario has indicated as well—I think this is really an important study they put through. Their study indicated that older adults residing in long-term-care homes in Canada are more likely to use atypical antipsychotic drugs than those living in the community, and there's sufficient data to be able to identify this. But what's really troubling is that these results suggest that antipsychotic therapy is not being prescribed based on clinical indication; rather, the decision to prescribe an antipsychotic therapy appears to be related to the nursing home environment, with some environments being more permissive about drug use.

Of course, according to our own law, you are not supposed to prescribe without consent. Interestingly enough, in our law in Ontario, we talk about the use of restraints, but those are physical restraints. They are not chemical restraints, which is in fact what they call an antipsychotic drug.

There still should be required in every long-term-care home a patient care chart that speaks to consent, what the drugs are being used for, who prescribes them, the dosage etc. However, again the Law Commission goes on very clearly to say that, "In addition to the requirements of consent, the current legislation governing long-term-care homes requires a resident's plan of care to be reviewed at least quarterly by the multidisciplinary team."

So I thought, "Do you know what I'll do? I will go and ask them questions about what, in fact, is happening in our long-term-care homes," and I would like to share that with you. There are 634 long-term-care homes in Ontario. Just over 300 of them use physical restraints. The use of physical restraints, on average, is 13.9%, depending.

The interesting part is that some long-term-care homes have 1%; others have as high as 50%. Obviously, it depends on the clientele. And restraint can also mean not just being restrained in your bed or your wheelchair, but also if the wheelchair is tilted, for particular individuals who might require that. So the reporting structure is really, really important.

1520

But interestingly enough, between 13% and 50%—302 or 304 homes, give or take one or two if my math isn't correct—use restraints: over 13%, 13% to 50%, or some 300-odd homes in this province. When you look at the client base within a long-term-care home, they're roughly similar. You have individuals who come in with early forms of dementia to those who have chronic and complex needs. Why would some homes be at 1% and some homes at 30%? Why would some be at 1.2% and some at 15% or 18%? Is there a correlation between the use of antipsychotic drugs and the use of restraints in long-term-care homes? That's a really important question to ask, because it's the Ontario Drug Benefit that actually keeps track of the use of those antipsychotics for people over the age of 65.

I think this is an important issue for us to look at. I'm looking at it from the point of the use for Alzheimer's. In fact, if you look at it, the evidence from Ontario indicates that, once administered antipsychotics, 80% of the residents remain on that medication nine months later. This is from Professor Sube Banerjee in the United Kingdom in 2009, and he spoke to his own. These drugs appear to be used too often in dementia, and, at their likely level of use, potential benefits are most likely outweighed by their overall risk. This is a problem across the world. It's certainly a problem that we have to be able to deal with.

So what this bill is to do is to actually set together an advisory committee, made up of the people who are on the ground and living and dealing with this disease, to make recommendations to the minister on developing a strategy for this tsunami that I think is going to overtake us in the not-too-distant future.

Somebody asked me today, "Why are you interested?" Well, the obvious is because it's my constituents. Another is that maybe I'm over the age of 65 and reaching that time, because there are more women with dementia than there are men. That's because, typically, women live longer. But the other is, for me, a fundamental belief that you can age with dignity in this province. It's just not a place to grow old; it's a place to live while you grow old. It's a place to be respected as you age.

Interestingly enough, our First Nations talk about their elders and we talk about our old people. I think that we need to start talking about the folks who are older with respect and the dignity that they deserve. In the case of those who are vulnerable, it's our responsibility to ensure they have the best oversight we can provide and that nobody is put in a position where they feel, or their families feel, they are compromised. I think this is an important part for all of us, so I look forward to the comments and to your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

I would like to start by thanking the member for Etobicoke Centre for tackling this important initiative, for bringing it forward three times, and hopefully this is going to be the time when it will actually see its way to and through third reading. You can just hear the passion that she has for this subject, and she is to be congratulated for continuing with it. Thank you; good work.

This bill comes at a time when our society is facing a tsunami of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The statistics are alarming. As Ontario's baby boomers enter their senior years, the number of people suffering from dementia will increase from 200,000 in 2013 to approximately 300,000 by 2025.

My riding of Whitby—Oshawa and the broader area of Durham region are also seriously impacted by this disease. With some 7,000 seniors in Durham region suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia, Durham

region currently has the seventh-largest population of individuals living with Alzheimer's and dementia in the province of Ontario. Incredibly, that figure is projected to double to more than 15,000 cases of Alzheimer's and dementia by 2030.

It's clear that as our population ages, Ontario's health system will experience a serious influx of Alzheimer's cases. While Alzheimer's itself is a serious issue for the individuals and families that suffer from it, this seriousness is elevated when one considers the disease's impact on the broader health system.

I'll give you just a few examples. Persons with dementia are three times as likely to be hospitalized compared to persons without the disease. Moreover, hospital stays are twice as long, on average, for people with dementia—primarily seniors—compared to people without the disease. Since dementia patients are intensive users of health care resources, it's also vital for the sustainability of our health care system to develop a long-term strategy for tackling this disease.

There are many issues that need to be resolved to deal with the challenges of dementia. We need to continue research into the causes of Alzheimer's and promote proven therapies and services which can slow the progress of the disease. Of equal importance to research into Alzheimer's is the need to support family members and caregivers who care for their loved ones under very difficult circumstances.

I'm sure that all of the members of this House will have constituents where there are two older spouses, one of whom may have Alzheimer's disease, and the other spouse is left to care for them, with little or no support or respite. They are exhausted and have little hope, but that's what Bill 54 offers; that's what it's attempting to do.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, Ontario will be facing major health care challenges as our population ages. We need to support families who are affected by this disease and invest intelligently in community supports and services in order to be able to provide appropriate levels of support.

The member from Etobicoke Centre talked about the use of antipsychotic drugs in long-term-care homes. Clearly, this isn't a best practice. We need to develop better systems and better ways of dealing with Alzheimer's and dementia, find those best practices and then be able to disseminate them across the province.

Bill 54 makes significant strides towards developing these long-term strategies in our health care system. I certainly support it and I urge all of the members of this Legislature to support it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise and speak to this bill. Absolutely, we support it in the New Democratic Party. I want to personally attest to the integrity of the member from Etobicoke Centre in bringing this forward for the third time, but not only that, for her integrity and her courage in all things in this House. This is a woman who stood and voted with us for

CAS—children's aid society—Ombudsman oversight, the only person in her party to do so, and she's the whip. It's very rare you see those displays of courage around here. She was one of the ones that evidenced it, and I just wanted to give her a shout-out for that.

You can't help but think, in light of recent news reports, when you support this bill—and of course we do—about the story of the family in the Ottawa region that gave up their son because of a developmental disability and because of their exhaustion in trying to look after him. Can you imagine how many families are going to feel exhausted with this issue at the other end of life? We are, as has been said, facing a tsunami of aging and a tsunami also of diagnosis for both Alzheimer's and dementia of various sorts. Many families will do what families who love their relatives tend to do: try to accommodate them at home and try to look after them, and eventually become so exhausted and overburdened that they can't any more. Then they're faced with institutions, long-term residences, where overworked staff—just about every day here I read out a petition about the overworked staff dealing with developmental disabilities. Well, it's the same in long-term-care homes. Years ago, we were calling for 3.5 hours of patient care per resident per day, and we never even came close; I think we're around 2.8 or 2.9. So, imagine: With this kind of diagnosis going into places, at best we are going to get custodial care.

The member for Etobicoke Centre outlined what kind of abuses could happen in a situation where barely custodial care is being able to be extended, not because of any lack in terms of the compassion of the staff but simply because there are not enough hours in the day and there are not enough staff, so you start looking for shortcuts. This is what can happen.

1530

It reminded me also of the other end of life, of a petition that my friends to the right here have been reading out that I also have supported, and that is the over-prescription for children. So at both ends of life, we have some serious issues that we really have to look at here.

The developmental disability issue: We know that there are 11,000 on a waiting list for residential help and agency help. I can only imagine what that's going to look like in the future for those who have a diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's. We have to do something; it's incumbent upon us to do something. We are the sandwich generation and we have to act. Kudos again to the member.

One thing: When my husband and I were in Sweden, we met with a number of MPs there from all political backgrounds and stripes. Of course, for a social democrat, Sweden is as close to heaven as it gets. So we went, and one of the things they do so much better than we do here is the way they look after seniors who had diagnoses, who needed care, whether it was Alzheimer's or dementia, or even just help fetching groceries or mowing the lawn. This was a really innovative program. You could, as a relative, go and get training. If you wanted to look after them, let's say—many relatives do,

but either they give up their job etc. or they don't have the training—you could go get the training and then join the union, because they were all unionized positions, who would then supervise you, but then go back into your home and be paid for looking after your own relative. I thought that was extremely innovative, and they said it was way, way less expensive than institutionalizing folk. There was still the same level of unionization and supervision, but for those who wanted to, at least some support. Right now, folk are doing it without any support, and that's what this bill hopes to address.

Of course, as New Democrats, we would like to see some teeth put into the bill in the sense that eventually, this advisory committee would get to a point where it needs money—money will be required to help. So we would hope that in the process of discussing this bill and when it gets to committee and before it gets back, there is some dollar amount attached to this so that it actually, even in its work, discussing and making recommendations, can have some sort of budget to be able to do that job well—because you can't do that for free either. So that's what we're hoping for.

Of course, it also raises the spectre of the five-day home care guarantee. We know that the government has met us in terms of dollars, in fact exceeded, but what concerns us is the guarantee for the five days' wait for home care isn't there. That also will help the member from Etobicoke Centre's quest.

Again, I want to leave some time for my colleague from Beaches–East York to speak to this, but kudos to the member. She really is a sterling example of passion made real in this place. I hope this passes finally on the third go-around and just a real shout-out to her as a vision of courage and dedication for all of us here at Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 54. First, like all our colleagues who spoke before me, my colleague from Etobicoke Centre—I mean who would come back to the House three times? Member from Etobicoke Centre, what can I say? Your commitment, compassion—our colleague from High Park already mentioned your tenacity—and hopefully this is three times a charm. I also wanted to recognize my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa for co-sponsoring the bill, because it is the right thing to do.

I remember my predecessor, Mr. Phillips, who served this House for over 20 years. He always reminded me in my first few months here at the Legislature that when you have a difficult issue with the House, always do the right thing. It may be contrary to some of the other people, but doing the right thing is the right thing to do.

During my time here to speak, I want to focus on a couple of things. The member from Etobicoke Centre spoke eloquently, with facts and with information about antipsychotic drugs. As someone who has worked in long-term care for a number of years, this chemical restraint has always been a concern to front-line health care providers, because at times it's an easy fix—easy in

the sense that you give a pill and you hope the situation will be resolved, but in reality, there are a lot of complications such as side effects, contraindications, and the fact here is, many of the family members who gave consent to this chemical restraint may not be familiar with or understand the contraindication or the side effects of the medication. So I want to applaud the member from Etobicoke Centre for raising that awareness today in her opening remarks.

I also want to remind every member of the House the bill is very thorough. I read the preamble, in terms of statistics. The data that the member proposed are that 181,000 Ontarians in 2011 had the diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia, but that just means that they were diagnosed. There must be thousands more who are not diagnosed who live among us in the community, and what are we going to do about it? This is the fastest-growing population, because we know, across Ontario and across Canada, the data and the demographic of the aging population is tenfold. So we are projecting, by the year 2020—about a quarter, a third, of our population is aging, so what are we going to do about it? With this particular disease, it is very, very tragic. I know the member from Whitby–Oshawa talked about caregiver fatigue and caregiver distress and the potential for elder abuse. This is right here. This is what it's all about.

The proposed Bill 54, if passed, will focus on, first of all, education and awareness. On page 2 of the bill, it talks specifically about the purpose of the Alzheimer Advisory Council, which focuses on education and awareness, and that is the right thing to do. I know the Alzheimer Society has done great work across Ontario, but we need to do more. Our government, both sides and parties, have to work to do more in terms of leading, not following on this particular illness.

The other thing is that this bill also focuses on seniors. We're now finding more and more young people with early Alzheimer's and early dementia. I remember, as a young nurse working at the hospital now called Bridgepoint, previously known as Riverdale Hospital, that one of the first women called to the bar as well as the bench had some form of early Alzheimer's. The tragedy here at that time is that the community, the family and the health care provider did not know the disease or how to properly treat it. So awareness and education is really critical.

The other piece is that the purpose of the council is clearly laid out on page 2 of the proposed bill. It talks about training to strengthen the skills of a person with Alzheimer's. But the training is not just about the person with the disease but also the caregivers, both the family members as well as the front-line professionals. At the end of the day, the strength of any bill is the fact that we communicate to the constituents and in this case across Ontario.

The other part of the bill—and I know my colleague from High Park talked about it—is the whole issue of providing more services. Page 3 of the proposed bill talks about the minister, his or her responsibility, and, as well, timeline reporting, because I believe it's the right thing to

do. In terms of the minister responsible for developing and implementing a strategy for research, treatment and prevention of the disease—because we know that the strength of any medical condition is how well we do in terms of research. I'm very pleased our government took the lead, recently funding the Brain Institute, because that again will support this particular bill, Bill 54.

The other piece—the last page of the bill, page 4—talks about government responsibility. Right there in section 7, it talks about raising awareness of the disease but also the issue of facilitating the training and professional development of health care providers. As someone who has worked a number of years in long-term care, I cannot stress enough about the funding and support of training. The number one challenge in many of the long-term-care facilities is the turnover rates of the front-line health care providers in these facilities. By providing continuous training and professional support, you're not only ensuring best practices but, more importantly, you make sure the best care is provided at the right time at the right place and to the right client or patient.

The other piece here in the bill is that the government will undertake partnerships. This is a very complex disease. It focuses on health first, but you're talking about financial challenges for the family. It may require the Minister of Finance. It may require education, because we need to ensure that the new future front-line health care providers—meaning Training, Colleges and Universities—will understand the care and treatment of dementia, early Alzheimer's, and the signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's and dementia, and also ensure that the public knows about this particular disease. At the end of the day, this disease does not improve; it progresses further. The last stage of dementia and Alzheimer's, of course, is death, but the progress of this particular disease requires proper training and support for the caregiver, whether they are family members or health professionals.

1540

The other piece that the bill talks about is the whole issue of improved accessibility. Again, oftentimes we focus on the elderly person with the disease. What do you do in this House and with front-line personnel in terms of the 40-year-old, the 30-year-old with early Alzheimer's or early dementia? What are we doing? They are among us. They are in our community. They are in long-term-care facilities right now.

The other piece here is that the bill also clearly lays out the membership: who it should be comprised of. Again, this allows the advisory council to be successful. The member from Etobicoke Centre was visionary and was persistent in making sure this bill not just clearly outlined the purpose of the council; it's telling the members, when they choose to vote on the bill, who in fact will be the membership, because there's nothing worse than having the establishment of a council or committee and we don't know who should be sitting on this particular committee.

Last but not least, I cannot stress enough why we need this particular bill. Speaking for myself for a minute, Mr. Speaker, having been in health care for almost 30 years

as a front-line nurse—I taught nursing for a number of years before I came to the House—this is one issue that front-line health professionals are having a lot of challenges with, because it's so complex, so challenging and multi-sectorial. Oftentimes, it focuses on the health component. We're not talking about the whole issue of housing. Patients or clients with Alzheimer's or dementia are very, very challenging to provide care for, because oftentimes we focus on their aggressions, and many times we focus on the disease, when in fact there's a multi-sectorial piece about this particular illness and disease.

I'm very, very sad that many of the families we know every day among us in our community—all 107 of us in this House know somebody in our community with this particular illness. How to provide the proper care and support in a timely and respectful way?

Again, I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke Centre and my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa for their leadership in championing something that each one of us in this House needs to move on, making sure it passes and goes through third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: As deputy critic for health, rural and northern Ontario, it's my pleasure to speak to this bill.

The member for Etobicoke Centre, Donna Cansfield, has done a wonderful job championing for people with Alzheimer's, and we thank her for that. I know this issue is dear to her heart, and I commend her on her passion.

I also commend Christine Elliott, the PC member for Whitby—Oshawa and a colleague of all of us. Christine is a very caring, compassionate person and leads by example in many actions and personal initiatives in her community.

Speaker, I am proud and pleased to support Bill 54. I support the establishing of the Alzheimer Advisory Council. Ontario needs to start a new page in how we combat dementia in the near future.

Dementia is expected to affect 300,000 people by 2025. It's going to impact all of us and all of our families at some point in time, and I trust there is no one in this room or no one watching at home who has not been impacted already.

In my case, I worked very closely with a hospital in my former capacity as executive director of the Bruce Peninsula Health Services Foundation. A lady, Grace Featherston, worked at the hospital for many, many years. She was the X-ray technologist, just a delightful, warm, wonderful, loving lady. About a year after she retired, she ended up contracting Alzheimer's. Maybe it was in process before, but it was just such a sad thing. I was a pretty young guy at the time, and she was one of those people who was just an open, warm hugger—you loved her to death—and she went down very, very quickly. Her decline was very sad to see. The saving grace in her case is she did pass fairly quickly—but there are other people. A friend of mine, a friend of our family—I grew up with his youngest son, all the way through public school. He now is in a retirement old-age home

because of his dementia. It's sad to see because he's as healthy, probably healthier than I am, yet he just doesn't really have the capacity from the mental side of things. It's very tough on the caregivers and very tough on the families, and just to see someone who was a dynamo of our community go through this. It really paints a picture and sends the message home. We all need to be doing what we can to push this forward. Again, I applaud the member for bringing it.

In my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we have an above-average seniors population, so this is particularly relevant to me, Speaker. It's one of the things, as I started considering running for office, that I knew I was going to be encountering as we come forward. It's one of the things that we have to be doing more today, to put a plan in place. We need to give those families and caregivers hope, and we need to do what we can to try to find, hopefully, somewhere down the road a cure.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank Deborah Barker and her staff and fabulous volunteers from the Alzheimer Society of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. They, again, do wonderful work. What I hear from her is that her numbers are just continuing to ratchet up every time I speak to her. We need to ensure that we're putting programs in place. We need to have early diagnosis and we need to put the mechanisms in place to ensure that the patient is always first and foremost: an early diagnosis, an early prognosis and plan so that everyone is being helped along the way.

Dementia patients are intensive users of health care resources. It's absolutely vital for the long-term sustainability of our health care program that we do tackle this, that we do make it a priority agenda.

One thing that came out in our Paths to Prosperity papers was the whole venue of mental health challenges. We've kind of parked those off to the side for many years, and we haven't treated them with the same importance that we have with physical maladies. We need to do that because this is going to become paramount; in fact, I would suggest today it is already paramount. If we're going to ensure that down the road we have a health care system that we can sustain and have those programs and services, we need to make sure this is a focal point as we go forward.

One of the most promising chronic disease management models is the patient-centred health care model. As we've put in our paper, we need, again, to ensure that the patient is first and foremost. We need to have collaboration; we need to have all the front-line health care partners working in collaboration. We can't be sending people off on 15 different visits. We need to coordinate that care much more effectively. That will be good for the families, certainly, most importantly, good for the patient, but also good for the economics of our province, because we can't continue to treat people with separate illnesses as separate. They need to be coordinated. They need to make sure that we have one centre of care and a patient is treated truly as a patient and not as a number. As we all know, disease prevention starts in the primary

care office, and we want to be focused on strengthening primary care by taking a more proactive approach, by reaching out with that early diagnosis and ensuring that every step of that process is covered by coordination and collaboration.

As Ontario contends with budget shortfalls and a debt totalling \$300 billion, management of chronic conditions such as Alzheimer's is among the most costly, so we have to address this. We need to make Alzheimer's a focus and ensure proper programs are in place, with a patient strategy for each person going forward, a proactive patient strategy with the patient absolutely at the core. It is critical to the sustainability of the health care system and is most important to the patients and their family.

I definitely will be supporting this bill, and I hope that we can get it to committee as quickly as possible and in fact get it initiated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: It looks like this is going to be unanimous because I want to talk in support of the bill as well. Whatever criticisms I may have of the bill or the government, it needs to be held and known from the outset that we all need to support this because it is the right thing to do.

As the other speakers have said, we have 200,000-plus people in this province who either suffer from Alzheimer's or dementia. Those who know the disease know that at first it's a little bit of forgetfulness. People live their ordinary lives; they struggle somewhat but are still able to feed and clothe themselves. They're still able to interact with their family members and still do most of the basic things every day that they need to do. But this is a disease that is quite horrible because, for many, it progresses very rapidly, and you can literally watch somebody waste away in front of your very eyes as the days and weeks go by, forgetting ever more things, forgetting family members, suffering sometimes with bouts of violence—not becoming the person at all you have known all of your life.

1550

It is so incredibly sad when I go into old age homes, as I know all members of this House do, to see people that you have known for so many years sitting there, really a shadow of their former selves, not many times knowing who you are although you've known them for 30 and 40 years and you're going there to visit. It's especially sad when it's a loved one, a member of the family that you're going to see, who has one week or one month been a vibrant, caring, wonderful individual and a few weeks or months later is starting to show all the signs of progression.

It's a hard thing to talk about to people who've had that experience in their family. I dare take it that almost everyone in this room, if they've not had an individual family member, has at least had a close friend or somebody they admire and love who has succumbed to this horrible disease.

Until we find a cure for it, though, we need to start thinking not only of those who have the disease but of the 500,000 or so people who offer some form of care to their loved ones. Oftentimes these people are husbands or wives, their children, in-laws, close relatives who come forward and care for someone who finds himself in this kind of distress. We know from statistics and anecdotal evidence that a person with Alzheimer's or dementia requires 75% more care than people who have other infirmities; a lot more care is required. We also know that the caregivers have a 20% higher stress level than other caregivers, because it is a really tough thing to try to get someone to understand. It's tough on them listening to the same story over and over and over again. It's tough on them seeing a person disintegrate. It's tough on them having to coax and cajole someone to do those things which they would have ordinarily done in their lives.

Another thing is their inability to continue. We know that many, many caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's can't go the long distance; in the end they have to give up. We also need to look after them. That's one of the reasons why New Democrats put forward in our budget bill—one of the demands was for a five-day home care guarantee, because people need to have that kind of guarantee for a loved one, that there will be someone there, not necessarily to do all of the care but to do some of the care, in order to free up the husband, wife, spouse, child to do the things that they have to do in their life as well.

The government answered part of this a time back with a caregiver bill, but with the greatest of respect, I don't think that was the whole answer or even part of an answer. The whole answer is to develop a system which allows people dignity when they get the disease, and family support so that they can deal with it individually, in the most humane and family way possible.

My colleague talked about her experience in Sweden. I will tell you that this is universal throughout the other countries in that part of the world. Denmark, for one, which I visited, and other places—Finland—have similar things that they do to help their aged and allow them to remain in their own homes.

To close, because I've only got just a little bit, we need a comprehensive approach moving forward and annual reports, which this bill contains, but we also need to give it some teeth and some money. I look back. We had a similar debate in this Legislature a few years ago about the Passport system for adults with disabilities. I said then, and I will say it again now, it's all well and good to put in a Passport system, it's all well and good to do what we're doing here, but if there is a failure to fund, in the end it will not work. If we pass this today, and we must, we have to think, down the long term, where does the funding come to make it work so that everybody who develops Alzheimer's is protected?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm going to just speak for a couple of minutes because the member from Barrie would like to also speak.

I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre, and also the member from Whitby—Oshawa.

I was personally touched with Alzheimer's in my family. My mother passed away when I was 10, in a car accident, and my mother had seven siblings; six of them lived together as spinsters, actually, in a house right here at 29 Cheritan Avenue on Yonge Street. My aunt got Alzheimer's at a very young age, roughly around the beginning of 60 years old. It was heartbreaking to watch, because she was such a part of our life to come in and take care of my twin sister and my other sister when my mom had passed away.

To watch that start and evolve at such a young age, and watching my aunts take care of her—that was so stressful for my aunts, because they wanted to take care of her. They were very strict Catholics and wanted to make sure she stayed in the home. They worked so hard. Of course, we all know that with anyone that has had Alzheimer's, they become very aggressive. They go back to a very childlike state. It was just so exhausting to watch them and to go over and help them so they could get a few minutes of time to either go get their hair done or go over and get groceries—because they were so proud to take care of my aunt.

I'm very touched by this, and the one beautiful thing about the House is that we have these opportunities to do compassionate things for people that have contributed to society and have given their all to be the best that they can. We owe it to them to give them this opportunity with Bill 54, and I'm grateful to have this opportunity to stand up and thank you both so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand here and speak to this bill today. It is something that's critically important. As has been mentioned before, it's one of those things that has touched just about all of our lives in one way or another, whether it's a friend or a family member who's got Alzheimer's or we've helped someone with it. I know in my case, a good acquaintance of mine had very fast, early-onset Alzheimer's in her forties. By the time she realized she had it, she really only lived for a couple of years afterwards—very tragic—and left a lot of people behind.

To actually enact an Alzheimer Advisory Council Act, I think, is very commendable. It's something that needs to be done. It has economic reverberations too, where we can actually start to deal with these things before they become a big problem in our society and actually end up costing us a lot more health care dollars at a time when we really need to look at different ways to do health care in Ontario, with the stress our system is under. If we can be more proactive, start to deal with these things a little bit faster and find ways and strategies to do that, I think this helps to actually accomplish that end.

Congratulations for putting the bill forward. I think it's a really commendable bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to say thank you, obviously, to my co-sponsor from Whitby–Oshawa, and to the members from Parkdale–High Park, Scarborough–Agincourt, Beaches–East York, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Burlington and Barrie for their kind words and their support. Everyone spoke very quickly about the issue of the caregiver. Let me share with you, this year alone, 87,100 hours—that will increase by 65% by 2020 to 144,000 hours. Caregivers are primarily the spouse—31%; the rest is family.

I'd like to tell you a very quick story. It really relates to the member from Burlington. I met a lady who was sharing with me about someone she knew, her husband, who had the progressive disease of Alzheimer's. He'd been the CEO of a company—a big man, really engaged, vibrant, in sports; he just did everything. The disease took him over, and she cared for him in her home. She supported him; they didn't have a family. She was tired, but she worked hard to make sure that she looked after him, and she did.

With that was a little element of shame, because they lost their friends; they were no longer invited out for dinner. She couldn't take him out for dinner because he would react somewhat differently in a restaurant, so they spent all their time together. Finally, one day he turned to her and he said, "Who are you?" She said to herself, "Oh, my God. I've forgotten to say goodbye."

I thought, that's when we have a responsibility to help those caregivers so no one else ever has to feel that they're so alone that they don't have the kind of support that they need to care for someone they deeply love. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1600

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 22, standing in the name of Ms. Mangat.

Ms. Mangat has moved private member's notice of motion number 27.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Wong has moved second reading of Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Wong?

Ms. Soo Wong: I ask for unanimous consent that this bill be ordered for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Wong has asked for unanimous consent to have Bill 53 ordered for third reading. Is there consent? I heard a couple of noes.

Ms. Wong, which committee would you like your bill referred to?

Ms. Soo Wong: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

ALZHEIMER ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Cansfield has moved second reading of Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Cansfield?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Send the bill to private members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Cansfield has requested that the bill go to—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): —regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed. So declared.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to second reading of Bill 65, what the government calls Prosperous and Fair

Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2013. Of course, as we recall, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government presented its budget in this Legislature on May 2. As we know, budgets in recent years have been presented in the Ontario Legislature lately in the last week of March or thereabouts. This budget was a little later than normal, but of course we're not living in normal times in this minority Parliament, as the government continues to reach out to the New Democrats, veering left in order to seek their support for the budget motion, the vote that will come sometime in the next couple of weeks, I guess.

I want to lead off my remarks with respect to Bill 65, the budget measures act, by reading to the House something that I presented in a newsletter in my riding a few years ago. On the front page of the newsletter, I talked about the skyrocketing provincial debt. I said to my constituents, "There is an important distinction between a deficit and a debt. A deficit is the difference between the amount of money a government takes in and the amount that it spends. The debt of a province is the total of each yearly deficit added together and is usually referred to as 'accumulated debt'...."

"Many people have developed a tolerance to governments accumulating" massive, "mammoth debts, but this is a dangerous attitude because the payment of the accumulated debt and its interest costs will ultimately come from taxpayers' pockets. Today's deficits and accumulated deficits are tomorrow's taxes. If the present trend continues, taxes will skyrocket.

"It is absolutely essential that the government learns to live within its means and stop adding to the debt, otherwise the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren will be jeopardized."

This is from my newsletter in December 1992, more than 20 years ago. I was privileged to serve at that time in opposition to the New Democratic government of Bob Rae, and, of course, the Liberal Party was in opposition as well. I was disappointed that, unfortunately, those words were not heeded by the government of the day, and I don't think are being heeded by the government to this day.

So we have Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts. Of course it lists, I think, 14 schedules, changes to various acts—42 pages of changes. The government has, I think, primarily tried to reach out to the New Democrats in this bill, as I said earlier.

Our caucus, in response to this bill, has a number of consistent messages that we are bringing forward in this debate. We believe that the solutions to Ontario's problems aren't really that hard to figure out, in fact; they're just not easy to do. The province of Ontario needs a government that has a plan to reduce spending and create jobs, and the courage to implement that plan.

We believe that too many people in Ontario are having trouble finding work and are losing hope in our great province. Of course, we're aware that in recent years the provincial government has presided over a policy agenda which has, I think, indirectly led to the loss of 300,000

manufacturing jobs. There are today between 500,000 and 600,000 people in the province of Ontario who would like to work but can't find a job.

The unemployment rate in the province of Ontario is something like 7.7%—persistently high. For many, many months, even years, we have had an unemployment rate in the province of Ontario which has been higher than the national average. I think that's something that the government has overlooked or, in recent years, even forgotten. They don't spend too much time thinking about it.

We believe that instead of taking necessary action in this particular provincial budget, the Premier used the 2013 budget to take us on the same failed Dalton McGuinty approach as was pursued by the Liberal Party in the last decade. If you look at page 208 of the provincial budget papers, you will see that spending has actually increased by \$3.6 billion next year alone. There is no real plan—I'd say no credible plan, no effective plan—to balance the budget. We've argued that the program spending projections going forward to the year 2017-18, which is the target year for balancing the budget that was set out by the Drummond report and that the government claims it can balance the budget by—that those numbers are actually fictitious. It's now clear that the only way to help Ontario become strong again is to set a new course with a new team. That is the position of our Ontario PC caucus.

I had the chance, of course, to respond to the budget after it was presented, as we all do with our local media. Actually, while I was in the lock-up, I had a chance to review the budget papers and the budget speech. Again, all of us as members of the Legislature have that opportunity—many of the members of the news media avail themselves of that opportunity as well—so that when we come into the House at 4 o'clock on the anointed day of the budget, we have, in most cases, read the budget and are in a position to respond immediately. In fact, I was writing the column that I was going to send to my local newspapers while I was in the lock-up and while I was in the chamber. So I was ready to respond, really, at 5 o'clock, which I was obviously wanting to do.

Mr. Speaker, I've now heard 22 budgets in this place as a member of the Legislature. We missed out in 1995 because you'll recall that the NDP government of the day did not present a budget in this chamber. They, in fact, had a budget statement that Floyd Laughren presented in the news, I guess at the press gallery or in the media studio. Then of course we had, remember, the Magna budget, which was not presented in this House—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: As a matter of fact, I was there, and there were seats set aside for all the members of the Legislature. I know some of the Liberal members chose not to be present at the time, at the Magna training centre. But I know for a fact they all received invitations, and there were seats set aside for all the members of the Legislature.

As we know, the Speaker of the Legislature eventually ruled—and, I believe, ruled correctly—that budgets

should be in the Legislature. He was quite right to draw that conclusion, and I agreed with his ruling in that respect.

But I have to say, when you think about it, the ruling was that the budget should be presented in the chamber. Implicit in that ruling is that the members should be the first ones to hear the budget contents, in the chamber. But, of course, we've seen a recent trend, especially in the last two or three years, where the government has thrown out the convention—thrown it out the window—of budgetary secrecy.

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As we know, a few years ago, Frank Miller, when he was Treasurer—apparently there were some documents that made their way into the garbage and some reporter was able to get hold of them, and there was serious consideration on whether or not the Treasurer would have to resign because some of these documents had been made public before the budget speech was presented in this House.

Of course, you remember the response of the Liberal Party, in opposition, when the Magna budget was presented at the Magna training facility. Of course, they were obviously very aghast that this would happen, and they were making the point that the budget should be presented in this House. So I wonder how they feel now and how they sort of square that with the reality that their party has taken a strategic approach to divulge the contents of the budget, through strategic leaks, in the days and weeks leading up to the budget speech itself. I would argue that perhaps we should consider bringing forward a point of privilege on that. Maybe that's something that we could consider doing and see what the Speaker would have to say about that, because I believe in budget secrecy. I think it's an important principle for a whole list of reasons, and when you put that issue in the context of the Magna budget, perhaps we should give that some thought.

I said that, you know, every budget that I've heard in the course of my tenure in this House has had a central story; every one has an interesting subtext and each one included some significant numbers. I've argued that the central story of the 2013 budget speech is that Premier Kathleen Wynne is taking the same overall approach to budgeting as her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, and that is bigger government, higher spending and higher deficits. All of these trends continue. Little has changed in terms of the basic budgetary approach under the Wynne government when compared to the McGuinty government.

The subtext of the 2013 budget, I would argue, was the political auction sale that led up to it, with the Liberals bidding higher and higher, with taxpayers' money, to secure the support of the New Democrats. The Liberals were prepared to meet every single demand that the New Democrats brought forward, and then some. The government veered to the left in an effort to get the NDP onside so that they could hang on to power a little longer. Of course, it remains to be seen what the New Democrats

are going to do, but we all look forward to hearing, hopefully next week, what they plan to do.

The 2013 budget included some significant numbers that I want to bring forward in this debate. The deficit is up almost \$2 billion this fiscal year, from \$9.8 billion to \$11.7 billion this year. In effect, the Liberals are borrowing \$1.3 million an hour, every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That's what an \$11.7-billion deficit means. The debt this year is up \$20 billion, this year over last, from \$253 billion to \$273 billion, and we note again that the Liberals have almost doubled the provincial debt during their last 10 years in office. I think it's important again to remind the House that spending is up \$3.6 billion this year after last, from \$124 billion last year to \$127.6 billion this year, and we note that spending continues to go up in at least 15 ministries. So when the government starts talking about how they're trying to hold the line on spending, I think we need to inquire, why is overall spending going up \$3.6 billion this year alone?

I think it's also very important to point out that transfers from the federal government to the province of Ontario are going up this year as well, from \$21.7 billion last year to \$22.5 billion this year, up something like \$765 million. I heard the Attorney General heckling our side during question period today about the transfers, and I think he needs to take a look at his own budget, because that clearly indicates that the federal government is increasing funding to the province of Ontario, through equalization, of course, and also, the health transfer goes up quite dramatically. Again, it was interesting that some on the government side weren't aware of that, and I think they need to take note of it. Obviously, one of the things that the Liberal government might be doing in the next few weeks or months is calling attention to the transfers from the federal government, but the fact is, federal transfers are up this year.

Another important number to consider in the debate on the budget and this budget bill is the fact that interest on the debt is up \$233 million this year, from \$10.4 billion to \$10.6 billion. As we know, we're currently in a climate where interest rates are relatively low, historically low, I guess, for some period of time. I hope that the government is making plans for what might happen and what we might have to do if interest rates go up; and I think interest rates most likely have nowhere to go but up in the medium term and long term. Of course, that will put dramatic additional pressure on our budget.

I know that the Liberals would have hoped to generate at least some good news in the days leading up to budget day and its immediate aftermath. But of course we know that the Oakville and Mississauga gas plant cancellations overshadowed the budget presentation. People in Wellington-Halton Hills now know the government dramatically and repeatedly understated the true cost of cancelling the gas plants. That is probably the number one issue that's being talked about in the coffee shops and on the main streets in our communities today. There have been repeated revelations at a number of the

standing committees of this Legislature which have called into question the integrity of the provincial government in terms of the public communications that they've made about the true cost of the gas plants. We see quite clearly that they certainly appear to have made a deliberate effort to dramatically understate the true costs, but now the truth is coming out.

I have to say publicly in this House, as I have to my constituents, that I do not support the overall budgetary policy of this Liberal government. I speak against it and will vote against it.

Now, because there is generally a considerable amount of latitude given to members when we're debating budget motions and budget bills, I want to raise an issue that was brought to my attention by one of my constituents when I was returning a phone call on Sunday afternoon. It concerns the Auditor General's reports from 2009 and 2011. I know that these Auditor General reports are very important documents that are released once a year, the annual report. There's usually a great deal of media interest for a day or two. We debate the Auditor General's report, usually in question period, for a day or two afterwards. The Auditor General's report is then referred to the public accounts committee, a standing committee of the Legislature, an all-party committee. The ministries that are identified as having had spending issues are brought forward into the committee, and they're asked to explain to the members of the committee what they're doing to address the issues that the Auditor General has identified. I think that that process, most of the time, works pretty well. But at the same time, this issue was brought to my attention, and I wish to bring it to the attention of the House.

I have an excerpt from the 2009 Auditor General's report, chapter 3, "Government User Fees." Just very briefly, the report indicates that there was a Supreme Court of Canada decision in 1998 that "concluded that user fees could be considered unlawful and therefore may be repayable if they were determined by a court to be a tax that was not established by enacted legislation or if the fee amounts charged were excessive and did not have a reasonable relationship to the cost of the services provided. Although the Ontario government has taken some actions over the past decade to help address this ruling, there are still fee revenues from alcohol, gaming, and registration services of over \$500 million annually that may be at risk because they may not fit the Supreme Court's criteria for valid fees."

The report goes on to identify the fact that the auditor determined that "revenues collected by the Ministry of Government Services for certain registration services significantly exceeded the cost to provide the services by approximately \$60 million, which is six times more than the costs to deliver them. At the time of our audit, the Ministry of Government Services had not established an action plan to address this issue."

Of course, the ministry's response to the Auditor General, which was included in the report, which I'm sure was discussed by the Standing Committee on Public

Accounts was, "The 2009 budget noted that the government plans to introduce legislation to replace various alcohol and other fees, levies, and charges with taxes to enhance their operational structure and legislative clarity. The government proposes to introduce this legislation at the earliest opportunity." That's what the Auditor General's report said.

Of course, going forward two years to 2011, again the Auditor General made reference to this issue under chapter 4 of his report, government user fees, and he again reminded members of this Legislature and the general public of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 1998, concluding "that user fees could be considered unlawful" and that basically the government would have to pay them back to the people that they charged them from, "if they were determined by a court to be a tax that had not been established by enacted legislation or if the fee amounts charged were excessive and did not have a reasonable relationship to the cost of the services provided."

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In the annual report in 2009, he also references back to it, and reminds the House that it "noted that the Ministry of Government Services was collecting revenues for certain registration services that were at risk of constitutional challenge because the revenues exceeded the cost of providing the services by approximately"—again—" \$60 million, and it did not have an action plan to address this risk. The Ministry of Government Services has since completed a costing and pricing review of its fees as part of the 2011-12 results-based planning process and has identified potential remediation strategies, including the possible development of a plan to reduce the fees over time. We were informed that the Ministry of Government Services is currently working with the Ministry of Finance to develop a strategy to address this issue for consideration by the Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet; however, no timetable was provided for completing this."

My constituents told me that I should wave these auditor's reports in the House and ask this government what they have done to respond to the auditor's recommendations. I put this to the government: I would ask that the Minister of Finance respond to me in writing with an explanation as to what the government has done with respect to this issue because clearly it's an issue of serious concern when it's been identified in two Auditor General's reports in 2009 and 2011. If the government is in fact collecting fees which are in excess of the cost of providing that service, it would appear that they are contravening a Supreme Court ruling from 1998. So I put that to the government, and I would ask for a response.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running out of time, and I've got a lot more to say. I hope to have a chance to speak to the budget motion when that is called for debate at some point in the future. I don't know if you're going to call it this afternoon perhaps or maybe next week—the actual budget motion. Some of us will have the chance to speak to that motion as well, and we will be able to

express our concerns on behalf of the people of our ridings who we're so privileged to represent.

But again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing the questions and comments of the other members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to take these two minutes to make a couple of comments. I guess the first one is that the budget process is never an easy one in a minority or majority government because it is the key thing that this Legislature does, to decide how we're going to order up the finances of the province of Ontario for the next year.

I'm quite proud that our caucus, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, has taken that very seriously, both in the last budget and this budget has said, we're in a minority Parliament, so it is a question of being able to try to do what's right for the people back home and not just in our own constituencies as New Democrats, but for people in Ontario. She put forward last year, as she has this year, along with our caucus, a number of proposals which the government has accepted. That, I think, bodes well for what this Legislature should be all about. It should really be about how we, as legislators, come together and decide these issues about how we order up the finances of the province of Ontario.

I still don't know what's going to happen in the end, if we are ever going to be able to conclude a final budget motion or conclude a third reading on the budget bill, because there's a couple of steps to get there before we go. But it's clear that there's a couple of things that we are very keen on that need to be addressed, and that's the issue of accountability.

Yes, the government in this budget has responded by accepting most of the requirements that we had put forward as New Democrats. For that, I think that's a good thing. But the problem we now have is that we need to make sure that those things actually get delivered. This government has got a very long history of saying one thing and then doing absolutely nothing or doing the opposite when it comes to what the announcement was. That's why Andrea Horwath, for example, said yes today, that we need a parliamentary budget officer, essentially. Why? So that we can examine and scrutinize the expenses before they're made so that this Legislature can make better decisions about, "Is this the right thing to do?" I think that is a measured and reasonable request, and I certainly hope that the government follows through in accepting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to rise again in the House today to speak for just a couple of minutes in response to some of the remarks made not that long ago by the member across the way, from Wellington-Halton Hills, and also the member from Timmins-James Bay. I did have the chance to listen closely to the comments from the other side, and I have

to say that it was a good opportunity for me to hear some of the same concerns that have been raised time and time again.

As I said in my remarks in this chamber yesterday, this year's budget, as we propose it, is a document that is all about balance, fairness and moving forward in the most responsible way possible to make sure that we continue to have the kind of economic recovery here in the province of Ontario that the people of our various communities certainly desire and want us to have.

It's also very important to note that we are on track to balance our books by 2017-18. The fact that we continue to hit all of our deficit reduction targets and are one of the only governments in Canada to have done this consistently and repeatedly is something that I think speaks well in terms of making sure that we hit our targets over the course of the rest of the time between now and 2017-18.

Also in this budget, we continue to invest in crucial areas like public infrastructure. I think of my own riding, and I think of Highway 427, that this budget proposes to be extended, something that the people of York region and Peel region have been talking about for a number of years.

We are moving forward with these kinds of initiatives in this budget because we recognize that when it comes to economic recovery, when it comes to job creation and when it comes to fairness in society, this is the kind of budget that is going to keep moving Ontario forward. I would encourage the members opposite today, as I did yesterday, to take a look at what's in the budget, to reconsider, in the case of the official opposition, the stance that they took weeks and weeks and weeks ago, long before they had a chance to even hear the budget, that they would support this budget, and so would the members of the third party, so we can keep moving Ontario forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Thank you. The member from Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to the member from—

Interjection: Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Rod Jackson:—Wellington-Halton Hills and his comments. They were very appropriate, I believe. What we're looking at in Ontario isn't necessarily supporting this budget as a party. We're talking about supporting this government. This government has gotten itself to the point where not only can we not support this budget, we can't support this government anymore.

They have not shown an ounce of respect for the Ontario taxpayer. We've seen this through massive scandals, billions of dollars worth of scandals at a time when our debt is increasing by billions and billions of dollars. In fact, Ontario's debt has doubled since 2003. The debt per person has also doubled—

Interjections.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Absolutely. Can you believe that? The debt per person in 2003 was \$11,000; it's \$20,000 now. I just can't help but feel that the Liberal government

has no idea how much damage they've done to the state of jobs and the economy: 300,000 new bureaucratic jobs at a time when there's 600,000 people out of work in Ontario.

You don't generate wealth by creating government jobs; you create wealth by creating small jobs. You create wealth by creating jobs for small businesses. Seventy-five percent of all people who are employed in Ontario are employed by businesses with four or less employees. Those are the people who we need to help employ more people. That's how we do it: We make it easier for them. Get rid of the red tape. Start actually doing things of action.

Actually take Don Drummond's—your own hand-picked economist—advice and implement more than 60%. He said that you need to implement, within a year, 100% of his proposals or take equivalent action. You haven't taken barely even half. Show the Ontario people that you mean what you say and actually take action instead of talking about it. We need more than window-dressing, folks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to say that it's a pleasure to rise, always, in this House, but to follow the member from Wellington-Halton Hills—he's been here a great many years—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: He looks so young. And he always delivers a very measured talk. For that, I just want to say kudos. It was measured.

But I want to talk about accountability, because it has been raised. We in the New Democratic Party have talked about creating an office to ensure accountability from our friends across the aisle, but more to the point, we actually came to the table and negotiated with this government, and hence—even though this is not a New Democratic Party budget; it is a Liberal budget—moved the bar forward on some issues for our constituents, whereas the Progressive Conservatives didn't sit at the table, didn't negotiate, and as a result, the bar has not moved one inch for their constituents.

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In terms of accountability, when they go back to their ridings, when they speak to folks about what they have accomplished for them in terms of the budget process, they're going to have to say, "We just walked away. We didn't negotiate. We didn't ask for anything. We were going to vote against it; we said it before we were going to read it." The response, I would say as a constituent, would be, "Why not? Why didn't you?" We're talking about a budget with well over \$100 billion to spend. Shouldn't you go to fight for your constituency in some way, shape or form to hope that some benefits—again, it's not going to be your budget—accrue to them?

We in the New Democratic Party believe in accountability. We actually think we need an office of accountability, a financial officer. But certainly we came here, and we're elected by our constituency to get things done,

to make a difference, to change their lives in some small measure, and I believe that we will do that. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have decided not to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): The member from Wellington-Halton Hills has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have the chance to respond very briefly to the members who provided comments with respect to my remarks: the member for Timmins-James Bay, the member for Vaughan, the member for Barrie and the member for Parkdale-High Park.

I want to say to the member for Vaughan, who indicated that this budget is one of balance and fairness and that the government is on track to balance its budget—I would refer him to page 109 of the budget papers. Of course, that indicates the government's so-called plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. If he looked at his own party's budget, he would see that the program spending from 2014-15, which would be the next fiscal year, through to 2017-18 would be frozen at about \$118 billion a year. We would question whether or not the government has the will to do that. I certainly don't see any details as to how that would be achieved. We know that this Liberal government has a propensity to raise spending, not freeze it. Certainly, this year's budget is a good example; it is, of course, going up by \$3.6 billion year over year.

I would say that the member for Barrie made a lot of good points in response to my remarks, and I thank him for that. He mentioned the Drummond report. Of course, we recall the Drummond report that was presented to the Legislature just over a year ago, where a significant number of recommendations were brought forward, some of which the government has shelved and some of which the government has adopted. But of course, we remember Don Drummond's recommendation that if we didn't do all of the recommendations and implement them all, it would be impossible to balance the budget by 2017-18. Our party has certainly argued that if they're going to pick and choose amongst the recommendations and not implement some, they've got to put others on the table if we're going to be successful in balancing that budget by 2017-18. We would urge the government to redouble its efforts in that respect: prioritize spending and ensure that the future of Ontario, the children and grandchildren, will in fact inherit a province that isn't including a massive provincial debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to stand in this House and an honour to speak on behalf of Ontarians and also those wonderful people from Parkdale-High Park.

When people tell you that you're going to be debating the budget and you're going to be speaking about the budget, there is a tendency for eyes to glaze over in the viewing public. I want you to stay tuned, though, because I am going to attempt to actually make this debate entertaining in some small measure.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Tell us a joke, Cheri.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm not going to tell any jokes, as the member from Davenport suggested. No, there are no jokes, unfortunately. It's far from a laughing matter. But I do want to tell some stories.

The first one is this: At a conference that I attended of state legislators and also members of provincial Parliament from across Canada and the States, there was a keynote speech. The keynote speech was by a governor—I won't mention the name; in fact, I don't remember his name—who was retiring from his role as governor in Pennsylvania; a Democrat. He said, "I'm retiring, so now I can tell the truth. I don't have to bow to any pressures; I'm outta here.

"Here's what we need to do in the United States—not just in the state of Pennsylvania; here's what we need to do in the entire United States. We need a medicare system like the Canadian one, that single-payer medicare system. We need to put more money into education and more money into infrastructure."

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely. "And to pay for all of that," he said, "we need to roll back the \$900 billion of tax cuts to the wealthy and corporations"—brought in by Bush alone, \$900 billion; the number is staggering, but it's true—"and \$1.6 trillion in corporate and wealthy tax cuts since the Reagan era."

Then he said, with a note of sadness in his voice, "And we're not going to do any of the above." So sayonara, he said; off the stage. That was it, one of the better political speeches I've ever heard.

If you hold that image in your mind, you get at some of what we're facing here, and it's a problem. It's a problem because even when it comes to what seems paltry in comparison to those figures, the \$1.3 billion we've been asking for that we don't want to be spent—a gift to corporations, as it were, to be able to write their HST off of their entertainment expenses—we find out late in the game, well after we've had this as one of our asks on the table in the New Democratic Party, that, lo and behold, it obviously wasn't taken very seriously or seems to have slipped the Minister of Finance's mind. But in the days before the budget was tabled, he writes a letter to the federal finance minister asking to negotiate around this.

Our critic Peggy Nash, who is the MP in my riding of Parkdale-High Park, actually stood up and asked a question on this topic in the House. The response that she got was no: "No, we're not going to renegotiate." To leave it, first of all, that late in the game; second of all, to pay it such small heed as to treat it that way; and thirdly, to absolve the responsibility this provincial government has around revenue sources is very strange, I have to say, very strange indeed.

There are some other notes around here that go to the former governor of Pennsylvania's problems with his own government. For example, in this budget, we see that corporate taxes are going down again—and I just pointed out how—from about \$11 billion as a revenue stream to about \$10 billion. On the other hand, where is

the new money coming from? We see income taxes going up about \$4 billion. They're going up about \$4 billion, from \$26 billion to about \$30 billion. One wonders why? How? Who is going to pay these extra income taxes? It's not really spelled out in this budget; it's kind of a question mark, the assumption being, and it's somewhat fleshed out, "Well, we're going to be growing. We're going to be earning more. We're going to somehow make these targets." I would say a red flag, a suspicious red flag there.

Really, if you look at the history of corporate taxation in this province—by the way, one of the lowest corporate tax bases in the western world, far lower, my friends, than the Americans. Our friends to the right here and our friends who pretend they're not to the right across the aisle would say, "This is how you create jobs. What you do is you pour the money in at the top to the wealthy and to the large corporations and, somehow, it's going to trickle down into jobs." But the reality is it hasn't. It never has, it never will, and it hasn't. About 86 billion in Canadian dollars spent on that theory have ended up in banks, just stashed away by those very same corporations and wealthy individuals who didn't use the money to create jobs, who didn't invest in infrastructure, who didn't invest in education, who didn't invest in machinery or creating jobs of any sort. They just have it sitting there. So it didn't work.

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I always love the "tax and spend" expression when it's applied to us, of course, or to the Liberals by my friends to the right of us here, because what government doesn't tax and spend? Every government taxes and spends. The only question is this: Who do you tax and who do you spend the money on?

I would warrant that the Liberals and Conservatives have something in common here. Clearly from this document, and clearly from words from the mouths of my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party, what they would like to do is spend it on corporations and wealthy individuals, and tax the middle class and those below, both directly and also by way of cutting social services. That's a different kind of tax, right?

What we in the New Democratic Party have said, always as part of our DNA as social democrats, is that what we think you should do is, of course, tax more progressively and fairly, that corporations and wealthy individuals should pay their fair share and that money should be spent fairly on social services where they're needed. That actually generates wealth, and by the way, it's been proven around the world to do just that. That kind of progressive economic thinking—not the thinking of bookkeeping but progressive economic thinking which, by the way, is progressive business thinking too. I used to be in business. Business works this way too. You invest money first, and then you see the profits come out after. You don't slash and burn and somehow expect to make money. It doesn't work that way anywhere, and it doesn't work that way in government either.

We are now dealing with a province that spends less on social services per capita than anyone else in Canada,

so clearly the Liberal government has a lot in common with the Progressive Conservatives; in fact, we on this side like to say that they're Conservatives in a hurry. That's what is happening over there. What else can we say about taxing corporations and wealthy individuals fairly so that others are not unfairly taxed?

A member over here, when he was speaking about this budget, brought up the spectre of Greece. Greece is a popular spectre to bring up in these circles and in these discussions, but it's always done ill-advisedly, because in fact austerity budgets in Greece are what caused the problem. It wasn't social democracy or socialism in Greece; it was a conservative government, time and time again, that slashed and burned, that created the problem Greece had. So if you're going to compare us to Greece, then that's comparing one conservative government against possibly another.

Again, what we proved—and I think we in the New Democratic Party proved this in the last budget go-round—was that there is an appetite among Ontarians for fairness: fairness in taxation, fairness in revenue tools. We proved that with, I think, one of the best things we've done, and that is to push this government across the aisle, a Liberal government, into a wealth tax. Now, it was more symbolic than actual; I'll give that, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't a lot of money that was generated by that, but it polled at 78%. Seventy-eight percent of Ontarians thought that somebody making over \$500,000 a year could afford to pay just a little bit more to keep what we value as Ontarians going. You know, this isn't rocket science.

I'll share another story. I met a broker at a function I went to. He made \$500,000 a year. He came up to me in the last budget go-round, and I expected to be criticized because he was one of the ones we wanted to levy that tax on. He didn't complain, but he said, "You know who you should really go after? Some of my clients are getting away with sending their money south to the Cayman Islands and other places. You should go after them." That's what the broker said, who made \$500,000 a year. So there is clearly an appetite for fairness there.

I've already spent some of the time. I want to spend time on the other part of the equation, and that's where the money is going, because I had a very poignant call from a constituent who's on ODSP and wanted to know what was in the budget for him. I explained to him, you know, "Instead of being clawed back the \$200 you make, you can keep the whole \$200," and he said, "But I'm disabled, and I can't work." Then I said, "Okay, so you get a 1% increase on your disability cheque," and he said, "My rent went up 2.5% last year."

Now, that to me is—I know I'm not alone in this, but one of the reasons I ran for political office, one of the reasons I have the privilege of standing here today, is because of the issues of poverty. I have to say that if this is a social justice Premier and this is supposedly a social justice budget, then it's sadly lacking when at the end of the day those who are most marginalized in our community are actually worse off than they were under

Mike Harris. And that is the reality. That is the reality. They are worse off.

Now, did we put forward minimal demands in order to work with the government to get something done? Did we want the bar pushed ahead a little bit? Yes, we got that, Mr. Speaker. We got that. But this, I remind everyone, is a Liberal budget; it is not a New Democratic Party budget. As such, it does a very Liberal thing. It does the least required of it where the marginalized are concerned, and it does more than was ever asked where the wealthy and large corporations are concerned. So that's really what we see.

Is there anything about community start-up in this budget? No, there is not, sadly, even though those who work in the anti-poverty area would have liked to see that come back.

Is there anything, even a mention, about housing, when we have the worst per capita investment in housing of any province across Canada? No, not one word about housing, unfortunately.

Are there some good things? Yes. But let me put this forward, Mr. Speaker: We really have to shift our thinking. Poverty actually costs us money. It costs us, in fact, and this is proven, about \$10 billion a year.

On another file, I want to use the example of Quebec, because when you look at Quebec and their investment, for example, in child care, where you could get child care at \$7—I think it's \$10 a day now—they put the money in. Just like the example of priming the pump for corporations, you invest and you expect a return. They did that with child care in Quebec. They invested heavily in child care so that folk who needed it could have it. And guess what? After a number of years, it not only pays for itself; it makes them money. It makes \$1.05 to every dollar they invested in subsidized child care in Quebec. That's true economy. That's how good business thinks. You invest and you get a return on your investment. That's what they did.

If we invested in trying to eradicate poverty to the degree that the situation calls for, we would in fact save—not only save money; we would make money in our budget. For example, poverty costs about \$2.9 billion in health care costs. Child poverty costs between about \$1.3 billion and \$1.6 billion. You know, locking people up, the justice system, a lot of the social determinants of health—and a lot of folk who end up on the street end up using the justice system—that is around another billion.

I mean, productivity costs alone make up the balance. When you have people living and dying on the street, you are wasting not only human potential; you are wasting economic potential as well. That's the way an economist thinks. It's even the way some business leaders are coming around to thinking on the issue of poverty. But we don't see that reflected here.

Another story: I remember when I used to be the housing critic, and I sat when John Gerretsen, who is now Attorney General, was then the minister in charge of housing and municipal affairs. There he was in government agencies and we showed him the figures to

prove that it costs over \$100 a night to keep somebody in a shelter. What, you say? What kind of economy would pay that money to keep somebody in a shelter? For \$100 a night, there are some motels I could direct you to where you get a night in a motel. But that is what poverty means. Poverty is a skewed way of looking at the economy.

So why is this government not investing in housing, knowing it costs so much to keep people homeless? It costs money to keep people poor. It costs money to keep people homeless. It costs money to keep children in poverty. This costs us in real dollars. So where's the political will to really tackle these issues? I don't see it. I don't see it here. I see some minimal steps forward, yes, but certainly not enough to see the return on investment that one would expect, the kind of return on investment that I've just described happens in Quebec, where \$1 into child care gets \$1.05 back; it's just that you have to put the dollar in first. Just like business: You put money in and you get profits out.

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Finally—I'm running out of time—I just want to use an example, again, of Sweden, where my husband and I travel and talk to people. Here is a community of nine million people; we have 13 million-odd in Ontario. Somehow in Sweden they manage to do things we can only dream about. Somehow in Sweden they manage to have free post-secondary. Somehow in Sweden they've managed to eradicate poverty for all intents and purposes. Somehow in Sweden they manage to have a minimum wage well over \$13 an hour, a unionized McDonald's to boot, an 85% unionization rate, by the way, and dental, pharma care and all of those programs that we wish, in our dreams, we could have here in Canada or in Ontario. At the same time, they have an incredibly vibrant economy. They have Sony Ericsson. They have Ikea. They have Volvo. We could name a number of Swedish companies. They're doing very well, thank you very much. They're essentially baking a bigger pie and dividing it up more fairly.

Ultimately, as we move forward in the budget process, you move forward to the point where I think an NDP budget could actually be tabled. When we're in government, we'll be looking at issues like that. For now, it's enough to say, on two fronts: Number one, on revenue streams, there's some discussion to be had. In light of the Pennsylvania governor's story, do any of us here really want to walk away from this chamber and say, "We should have, we could have and we didn't"? Should the wealthy not pay their fair share? Should corporations not pay their fair share? It's a question.

On the other side, the poor gentleman on ODSP for whom \$2 doesn't mean much because he can't work and for whom a 1% raise doesn't mean much because his rent just went up by 2.5%, we have to answer to him too, and we have to answer to all those like him, all those children and women and men in our community who barely get by, who are doing worse now than they ever did under Mike Harris and his drastic and draconian cuts and who

we need to answer for, both ethically and economically, because not only would money invested in their lives easily pay back \$1.05 on \$1, but because it's the right thing to do. Just very simply, it's the right thing to do.

I'm almost out of time. Suffice it to say, I didn't get time to talk about holding the government's feet to the fire on their promises, because that's another piece of it. That's why we proposed a financial accountability office, which is nothing novel. This is what the feds have been doing for a while; we just want here what they have.

I think, in light of the gas plants, eHealth and Ornge, it's the very least we can ask for, and, in light of the promises, such as they are, that are made in this budget, it's the very least we could ask for too. I'm going to stop there and let others have a kick at this can. All I can say, to the person on ODSP and the governor in Pennsylvania who didn't see the American reality he wanted to see, is: We're working on it. We've pushed the bar a little bit, but boy, we've got a long way to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to commend the member from Parkdale—High Park, who put a number of views on the record this afternoon. I think it's very important.

I just happened to see a couple of interesting quotes today from a number of very prominent Ontario leaders. One is by Sid Ryan, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour:

"I don't think [the NDP] should call an election. I don't think they should bring down the government. Labour leaders have spoken to Andrea a couple of weeks ago, and we relayed that message that we think now is an opportunity to get some decent gains for our people in Ontario."

Then we have Dave Coles, another significant labour leader in the province of Ontario. He's the national president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. His quote is, "This [budget] is proof that a minority government can work to the advantage of working people."

Then we have Fred Hahn—Fred does great work on behalf of CUPE in the province of Ontario: "I don't think the people of Ontario necessarily want an election. I don't think this is the time for one," from Mr. Hahn, a very distinguished labour leader in the province of Ontario.

I just want to highlight what I think is one of the most significant aspects of this budget, and it's the increase to the Ontario Child Benefit, which will move up to \$1,210 per child on July 13, which is time-sensitive to getting the budget approved. Together, these increases will extend the OCB benefits to an additional 90,000 children in 46,000 families in the province of Ontario.

I always recall what the late June Callwood—a very distinguished Canadian—said when we introduced the OCB; she said it was the most progressive piece of legislation in the province of Ontario in the last four decades. What better person to support the OCB?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member from Cambridge.

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, who thought it was a good idea to applaud when I rose in this House.

I'm very pleased today to speak to the comments made by the member from Parkdale—High Park, who obviously expresses some of the sentiments that she has not only felt over the last little while, but heard from residents across the province of Ontario.

I do want to restate a quote that I think is very interesting; it came from the leader of the third party, where she states that people were "tired of being ignored by governments that seemed more concerned with themselves, more concerned with their own political skin, with their own political opportunity, with their own political well-being than they were with everyday people." That was part of the leader of the third party's response to the budget motion that she spoke to earlier this week.

I have to wonder how you can make such comments and still potentially prop up this government. I know the member from Parkdale—High Park stated that this isn't an NDP budget, because the NDP would have written a different budget. I note with interest that she suggested that the NDP will table an NDP budget when the NDP forms the government. I find that very interesting, that she phrased it in such a way, because certainly—as the Premier likes to talk in this House—this is not just a budget, but it is a confidence motion. It's an expression of this House on whether they have, and continue to have, the confidence of this Legislature, and that is something I think the member from Parkdale—High Park should address.

But I also want to ask her in my concluding few seconds here: Does the member think that we have a revenue problem in the province of Ontario or a spending problem?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's my privilege to rise and speak on behalf of people in Davenport. I'm always privileged to speak after my colleague from Parkdale—High Park; we share a boundary, we represent similar communities and what that member said in this chamber just a few minutes ago is a refreshing change of pace. It's something we don't hear enough of in this House.

I think she made it very clear—and I need to make it clear to people in my community—that this is not an NDP budget; this is a Liberal budget. In fact, it shares more similarities with the Conservatives here than it does with us. However, I know that we have done our very best to engage this Parliament, to make sure that the other members in this chamber understand the kind of sensible perspective that the member from Parkdale—High Park brought forward: the understanding that we live here together collectively, and that we invest in our communities.

That's the role of government, to make sure that we make that investment and that it pays off for us all in the future—it should. It's clear that that has not been happening in the province of Ontario.

It's interesting to see members on the government side who actually—their eyes light up when they hear the member from Parkdale—High Park speak, because, I think, in their heart of hearts they think that this is actually what we should be doing. For whatever reason—maybe they've been there too long—they have not been able to deliver that.

She speaks in this way that is inspiring, because it's about the kind of society that we could have, that we should have and that we can have, and yet it's the kind of society that this government is not delivering. This government has run out of steam and, in fact—well, I don't know if that's true. I think it continues to steam along in the same way that it has been, and it is in the direction of austerity. It is in the direction of cutting off the very tools that we have in this Legislature to make life better for people in Ontario. We're going to continue to engage to try to make this government work for now, but I do not have a lot of faith in what they're doing.

1700

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: For the second time today, it's a pleasure for me to stand and provide some commentary with respect to the remarks made by the member from Parkdale—High Park.

I agree with what has been said both by my colleague from Peterborough but also the member from Davenport. The member from Parkdale—High Park, I think, did speak eloquently and put a lot of very interesting issues forward here in the chamber today. I think it's actually, from our perspective on this side of the House, a welcome change as compared to what we've seen from the official opposition over the last number of weeks and months, in that members of the third party, while they may not agree with us on every single aspect of this budget, are at least demonstrating to the people of Ontario that there's a willingness to have that conversation and engage in that dialogue.

What I find particularly interesting listening to the debate so far on the budget in this chamber is to witness the members of the official opposition trying to untie themselves from the pretzel, that sort of entanglement that they put themselves in months and months ago when they told the people of Ontario that notwithstanding whatever might appear in this document, notwithstanding whatever we might propose to do to keep Ontario moving forward, they had no interest in playing a constructive role and they had no interest in doing the job the people of their communities elected them to do, which does stand in stark contrast to what we're seeing from members of the third party, who I know support—I'm assuming, given the comments made by people like the member from Beaches—East York around the Ontario Trillium Benefit and moves that we've made regarding auto insurance.

I've said it before in this chamber over the last couple of days, and I'll say it again: I would call on the members of the official opposition to reconsider the unfortunate and irresponsible position they took weeks ago regarding moving our province forward, to reconsider their position and put the crass, partisan politics aside and work with us and work with the members of the third party and pass this budget. Let's keep Ontario moving forward together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks to all who engaged in this debate. To the question of revenue and spending—and this government has a problem with both, of course. They have a problem with, I would say, taxing and spending, the classic adage. They spend too much on gifting corporations and the wealthy, and they tax families both directly and indirectly through cutting their social services. So they have a problem with both. In that, we're in agreement. The answer, of course, we're in stark disagreement on.

In terms of the Ontario Federation of Labour or CUPE and their so-called support, I would question that quite decidedly. These are organizations that were appalled at Bill 115, the bill that the Liberal government brought in attacking collective bargaining and attacking teachers, and of course are not supportive of this government when they make moves like that at all.

I also want to say just for the record that it's very important that both Liberals and Conservatives understand where the record really sits historically with our parties. The New Democratic Party, with one exception, has had the best record of balancing budgets in the history of Canada—we have, provincially. The only one who didn't is now the leader, or was until recently, of the Liberal Party, and that was Bob Rae. That was the only government that didn't have a good record of balancing its budget. All others have had exemplary—including Tommy Douglas, who I think balanced something like 16 different budgets and still managed to bring in medicare. So it can be done, Mr. Speaker; it absolutely can be done. It arguably should be done. But we have to think economically and not like bookkeepers. We have to put investment in to see the results out, and I hope we do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I've sat here all afternoon, and I've listened to all of the members offer their opinions on what's in the budget, what should be in the budget, what's not in the budget and whether that's good or bad. But the real, real test of this budget is not necessarily what we think or what the opposition thinks of the budget, but the real test is, what does the public outside of this place think about the budget? Because they're the ones who are going to convey to us their reaction to the budget, and it's incumbent upon us to take their views into account. They're the taxpayers, they're the public, they're the people who sent us here.

At the risk of really upsetting people over there on the opposition PC side and the third party side, I'm going to take a little different tack and I'm going to tell you what the public really thinks of this budget.

Let me start with Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour: "I don't think [the NDP] should call an election. I don't think they should bring down the government. Labour leaders have spoken to Andrea a couple of weeks ago, and we relayed the message that we think now is an opportunity to get some decent gains for the people of Ontario."

What does the Canadian Federation of Independent Business say? "The Canadian Federation of Independent Business ... is pleased to see movement on some small business priorities in today's Ontario budget, including pooled registered pension plans ... the employer health ... tax exemption and plans to eliminate the provincial deficit."

There you are: two views arguably from the left and the right.

What do the banks think of the budget? Derek Burleton, vice-president and deputy chief economist, Toronto-Dominion Bank Financial Group: "A lower debt than we expected five, six weeks ago and a lower deficit, so [a] good starting point at least in which we can tackle the next four years of restraint."

What do the teachers think? Kevin O'Dwyer, president, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association: "We have seen a new tone of openness and collegiality in this new government. We saw this in the recent negotiations with teacher federations and we see this again with the Ontario budget. Clearly the government has listened to the opposition and to Ontarians in crafting this budget. It shows what can be accomplished if people and parties focus on making minority government work for the common good of all Ontarians."

What does distinguished NDP MPP and cabinet minister Frances Lankin think? Frances Lankin says, "We all know how important it is for people on social assistance to have the opportunity to find meaningful employment. Giving people the chance to earn more without lowering their assistance is a major first step. I am also pleased that the government plans to engage business leaders to champion hiring persons with disabilities."

How about this? Munir Sheikh, commissioner, Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario: "I am pleased with the first steps being proposed by the government to improve the social assistance program. The commission also recommended the structure of the program be fundamentally transformed. I am encouraged this transformation will continue to be on the agenda of the new cabinet committee on poverty reduction."

What do municipalities—important stakeholders—think of the budget? Russ Powers, president, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO—we all go to their conference; it's a must-attend conference for MPPs. What does Russ say? "The government has indicated an accountability and transparency to move forward on dealing with gridlock ... I think this is a good start."

What does the president of OPSEU say? The president of OPSEU, Smokey Thomas—listen to this, third party opposite: “I don’t see it as an election budget.”

What do the universities think of it? Constance Adamson, president, Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations: “We’re pleased to see that youth and youth employment are priorities for Premier Wynne.”

What does Kaley Kennedy, of the Canadian Federation of Students, think? “We are happy to see that the government will be spending some money on a youth employment strategy.”

This may be of interest to the member opposite in the third party. Sarah Blackstock—she’s deeply involved in the network for poverty reduction—“We think this budget is an opportunity to continue reducing poverty in Ontario. We are really eager to see the opposition parties work with the government to ensure that we continue making progress.”

1710

Well, what does Gil Moore think? You might ask who Gil Moore is. Well, he happens to be the CEO of Metalworks Group, and he says: “On behalf of our 85 employees at Metalworks, I wish to congratulate the government of Ontario for its commitment to maintaining a vibrant music industry. As a result of today’s announcement, the industry will get a much-needed boost in the arm.... Today is a great day for music in Ontario.” And it goes on and on.

Now, here, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—

Hon. Jeff Leal: They’re a great group.

Hon. David Zimmer: A great group. They’re the ones that are focusing on making stuff in Ontario and exporting it, because we need those export dollars, money that’s going to come in. That’s one of the great strategies: Jobs, jobs, jobs.

Ian Howcroft, who is the vice-president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters: “We are pleased to see the government formally recognize the importance of manufacturing to the province’s economy....” And here’s the key: “Overall, this budget is a good signal that” Ontario “wants to work closer with industry.”

Well, what does our good friend of the third party opposite and our good friend—and I wish it was your good friend—Ken Lewenza, national president of the Canadian Auto Workers—

Hon. Jeff Leal: What does Ken say?

Hon. David Zimmer: “These investments in our social and economic fabric are both badly needed, and appreciated. Creating new jobs and protecting the well-being of our families should be government’s top priorities”—should be the government’s top priorities—and this budget acknowledges that.

And our concern about seniors, long-term home care, Sue Vanderbent, executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association—and we should all be deeply interested in this home care issue: “We are pleased with the budget today because we know it will help us to serve more Ontarians and keep them safe and independent at home.”

How could you possibly vote against what we’re doing on this issue?

Well, what do the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario tell us? I would think that the official opposition would be certainly interested in what the accounting profession has to say about the budget. The accounting profession, Merv Hillier, president of the CMAs: “We support the direction the government’s budget is taking and commend Premier Wynne and Minister Sousa for facing difficult issues head on.... This budget sets the tone for renewed inspiration, continued conversations and achievable solutions.”

Hon. James J. Bradley: Wow, what a cross-section.

Hon. David Zimmer: What a cross-section.

So what does the nursing profession tell us?

Hon. Jeff Leal: How many more quotes do you have?

Hon. David Zimmer: Oh, I’ve got almost three quarters of an inch here.

Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, who is the president of the RNA of Ontario, says: “RNAO applauds the government for accepting the wisdom of Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh who made this recommendation when they reviewed Ontario’s social assistance system.” That should be of particular interest to the members of the third party.

Well, what does the Ontario Chamber of Commerce tell us? Allan O’Dette, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: “This year’s budget shows progress on many issues that matter to our members. We applaud progress on pooled registered pension plans, and holding the line on corporate income tax will keep us competitive.”

Just to balance off what the chamber of commerce thinks of the budget, we sort of flip to the other end of the political spectrum, if you will. What does Fred Hahn, president of CUPE, tell us? Now here we are, chamber of commerce and CUPE. Fred Hahn: “I don’t think the people of Ontario necessarily want an election. I don’t think this is the time for one.”

What does the Elementary Teachers’ Federation tell us? Their president, Sam Hammond, says, “Along with employment initiatives, funding to support expansion of summer learning programs for students in low-income communities, and funds to improve aboriginal student achievement, are welcome investments in our youth.” As the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I was particularly touched and welcome those items in the budget that are going to make a contribution to a better life for our aboriginal Ontarians.

Here’s an interesting quote from a former high-profile and very competent Tory cabinet minister, indeed a Tory finance minister, Janet Ecker, who is the president of Toronto Financial Services Alliance.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Wasn’t she a PC?

Hon. David Zimmer: What does she say? Yes, a PC—a Conservative finance minister.

“We are pleased that the actual deficit is better than forecast and we encourage the government to continue on this path.”

Interjections.

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, here's one I think that'll tickle the official opposition next door, because you know, they speak from a certain point on this political spectrum: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm waiting in anticipation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Are you ready?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm ready.

Hon. David Zimmer: Are you ready?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm ready.

Hon. David Zimmer: Candice Malcolm, Canadian Taxpayers Federation: "There are some indicators of economic growth ... and there's a payroll tax cut which helps; it helps small businesses looking to hire new employees ... there are ... inroads" here. That's the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Here's another quote from the Pembina Institute, Cherise Burda, the Ontario policy director—and this is a think tank; it focuses on business, economic affairs, especially issues in the GTA having to do with transportation: "We are happy to see the Ontario government follow through on promises to fund transit expansion in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area by introducing paid express/high-occupancy lanes, calling for a national transit strategy, and committing to dedicated transit revenues." Aha.

What does the Ontario Long Term Care Association—now we're back to the seniors issue again. Candace Chartier tells us: "Today's 2% increase in funding will assist in providing safer quality care for Ontario's most frail and vulnerable" citizens. Would you really want those people out there in the polling booth voting against you because you challenged this thought? "Strengthening long-term care is a win for the whole health care system, and essential to building an Ontario where seniors can live well, longer and where we get better value" care for our health dollars.

Here's another quote from Sheila Block, director, economic analysis, of the Wellesley Institute, another think tank: "Kathleen Wynne's first budget provides concrete progress on social assistance reforms."

I say to my member sitting beside me, the Minister of Rural Affairs, you might be interested in the reaction of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd love to hear; I'd love to hear that.

Hon. David Zimmer: I think you know one Bill Vrebosch.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Nipissing riding. West Ferris—I think he's the mayor.

Hon. David Zimmer: Northern Ontario.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, he is. Great guy.

Hon. David Zimmer: Be careful what people are thinking in northern Ontario, because here's what the Rural Ontario Municipal Association thinks: "The \$100 million being dedicated to rural and northern" communities "is exactly what we've been looking for for years. A separation of the money to make sure that rural and northern Ontario get a fair share ... For the government to recognize that, to me, is a feather in their cap."

That's what they're saying, the folks that you're responsible for, Minister of Rural Affairs.

So I urge caution opposite when you're toying with the idea of voting against this budget. Do you want to bring down that hammer on your heads? Do you want to bring down that hammer on your heads?

1720

Well, what does a very distinguished and effective and senior union have to say about this? I would urge the members of the third party to keep this in mind. Here we go: the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. What do they tell us? Dave Coles, who is their national president, says, "This [budget] is proof that minority government can work to the advantage of working people"—working people. I ask the third party to pay attention to that. "This [budget] is proof that minority government can work to the advantage of working people."

Ontario's medical doctors: What's their reaction to the budget?

Interjection: They want to hear it.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes. Here's what the OMA says: "Ontario's doctors were pleased that the 2013 Ontario provincial budget reiterated its commitment to move ahead with the implementation of several key initiatives, including children's mental health, reducing childhood obesity rates, the expansion of e-consultations, shifting ... routine procedures out of hospital and into clinics, and further investments in home care and long-term care."

We've heard a lot about gridlock issues and transportation issues. So what do you suppose the Ontario Public Transit Association has to say about the budget? Norm Cheesman says, "The commitment to new revenue tools and a permanent dedicated gas tax in support of transit infrastructure contained in today's budget demonstrates that public transit is a key priority. These new measures will help alleviate ... congestion, provide ... efficient mobility options and boost the economy, not only in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, but" all of Ontario.

Speaker, I've got about a minute and a half, and I still have—I make this just slightly over half an inch of comments on the budget. I have comments from police officers; I have comments from health associations; I have comments from universities; I have comments from more health care.

I have comments from—here's one from the Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association. They endorse the budget. Here are more comments from Sid Ryan, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation again; the Ontario Hospital Association—and it goes on and on and on.

In 45 seconds, what's the message contained in these endorsements? Two messages—taking a look at the budget, they like the budget. They think the budget is a good one. They think the budget is going to build the Ontario economy. They think that the budget is fair to all sectors in Ontario. Whether you're in social assistance, whether you're in business, whether you're a professional, whether you're an aboriginal, it's a good budget for everybody.

The second message, reading these quotes, is: At your peril, opposition members—official opposition, and third party—at your peril do you vote against this budget.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: With all your quotes, I guess we can expect that you will support our want-of-confidence vote.

First and foremost, I want to say to the leader of the third party: Hopefully, you're going to do your job and govern. If not, please let your 1-800 number be the leader of your third party. You can't lead from a crowd.

Second of all, I'd like to say to the government that you can't constantly start fires and then jump on the pump to put them out. Here are the facts: We have 600,000 people unemployed, we have 400,000 people on welfare, and we have 200,000 people who have stopped looking for a job. We spend \$1.8 million more an hour than we take in, and 20% of what we spend is borrowed money; it's our third-largest expenditure behind health and education. We owe it, as the Queen's loyal opposition, to do what is best for the Ontario people and to make sure that they have a life that they deserve.

You have taken our credit card and maxed it out. You've put our children and grandchildren in the terrible situation that they're inheriting a debt that they don't deserve.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, with all of us as PCs, has come up with our 13 white papers, our discussion papers. We have a plan. We need to get the economy going. Capital is mobile. Bay Street knows it. People aren't going to come to high debt and high taxes and high hydro.

We can't continue to have everybody leaving this beautiful province. We are now receiving equalization payments in what has now changed Confederation, for the first time ever. If that doesn't scare anybody, I don't know what else possibly could. We owe it to the people of Ontario to make a change and to change the team.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: quite the speech. In my nearly 12 years in this place, this is the first time I have ever seen a minister of the crown speak for almost the entire 20 minutes and not have a single original thought come out of his mouth. He quoted all and sundry about what a wonderful budget this is. But, you know, I remember many of those speeches myself, and it's very easy in a two-page comment to lift a line or two; because almost all of those had a "but" at the end, but he conveniently stopped before the "but." He conveniently stopped any criticism at all that was contained in the majority of these people.

The plethora of quotes conveniently left out any and all criticism, but I think the telling thing was at the very end when he threatened the members on the other side of the House. He threatened them that if we act, we do so at the greatest moral peril possible for a politician, for an Ontarian and everything else, because this government is

so correct in his view; in his rose-coloured-glasses view, it is so correct that everyone in the province will think, "Oh, my God. This is the Mother Teresa of all political parties and we will, in our own way, find that great peril if we, for even one second, disagree with them."

I would beg to disagree. He never talked about anything that my constituents and his constituents are talking about each and every day. Some of it, a little bit, is about the budget, but most of it is how this government is champion of all governments at wasting people's money and opportunity. That's really what he should have talked about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Indeed, I listened very intently to the speech that was delivered by my colleague the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the MPP from the wonderful riding of Willowdale. I must say, the only endorsement that was missing this afternoon indeed was the endorsement from Mother Teresa. I'm sure, with inspiration from above, that she would be sending us a message to add to that long list of distinguished people in this wonderful province who have provided laudatory comments for the budget that was delivered just one week ago.

I do have a moment. I just want to share with you—it's 5:30; I know some people from Peterborough have started their dinner, but I'm sure they're just tuning in to the parliamentary channel just before the last course. I know that they want to know that in terms of jobs and growth, we're still providing the competitive advantage of keeping taxes low. We're investing \$35 billion to modernize infrastructure and create—I know the people of Peterborough want to hear this number—100,000-plus jobs in infrastructure for roads and bridges.

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We're creating a youth jobs fund—particularly important to those wonderful students that attend Fleming College in Peterborough and go to Trent University. In fact, next year we'll be opening, at Fleming College, the most modern trades and technology centre in Ontario, in Canada and in North America. We all look forward to that great day.

We're also investing in fairness in society. I noted the increase in the Ontario Child Benefit, and allowing for people an exemption on the first \$200 of their earnings on ODSP and OW—a significant step forward. Auto insurance—I know that in the GTA, to get that deduction—whether you drive a BMW or a Jeep Compass like I do, there will be an opportunity to get that deduction.

A great budget for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and his comments on the budget. I think that I have to agree with the member from Beaches–East York that you can pull some quotes out of the air and make it seem like this is a budget everybody supports. I have to point out, particularly, the Canadian Taxpayer Federation. I read their press release, and let

me just tell you what the title of that press release says: It says, "The Ontario Budget Gets a Passing Grade—Barely."

I was a professor before I came to this place. A barely passing grade was 50%, a D minus. The next grade would be an F. How can anyone stand up in this place and say that that's actually an acceptable score on a terrible, terrible budget? Obviously, they can't; they haven't really come to grips with it.

Who wrote the budget? I think this is an important question that we ought to ask—a budget that lacked any originality—the only thing inspiring from this budget came from the New Democrats. Don't you have anything positive to say, anything inspiring that you want to tell the people? No, you pick a few ideas from the NDP, you slap your logo on it, and you say, "This is a great budget."

I have to wonder: Who is at peril? Who is at peril when they lack the originality, they lack the leadership, they're mired in scandal and the only thing they have to offer the people of Ontario is a budget that nobody—and I repeat, nobody—believes they will implement, because they've lost all credibility? No one trusts them anymore, and that's why this budget should be defeated on those points alone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, you have two minutes.

Hon. David Zimmer: Here's what I hear in Willowdale about the Tory position on the budget. I get calls—I'm not going to give names. I get calls that identify as Liberals. I get calls where some identify as NDP. I get calls, and people clearly identify as Conservative Party members, but what I hear from those Conservative Party members—and I haven't had one call from a Conservative in Willowdale that has been critical of the budget.

What I have heard from those people—they are good, responsible Conservatives, and do you know that they're upset about? They say, "David, I don't know what's going on with that party that I've been a member of, but how could they possibly, a day or two after the new Premier assumed office, say, 'Look, new Premier, we know you've got to introduce a budget in the spring, and that's going to be a couple of months down the road, but we're telling you right now, today, that whatever is in that budget—and we don't need to see it, we don't want to see it, we don't want to talk to you about it and we don't want to give you any ideas about what we might think should be in the budget—we're going to vote against it'?"

How does that fit the definition of Her Majesty's loyal opposition? That's the parliamentary tradition: Her Majesty's loyal opposition. It seems to me that it's incumbent upon opposition parties, if they don't like the budget or they've got criticisms of it, to offer up some alternatives.

With respect to the third party, they had criticisms of the budget. Fair enough; they sat down responsibly and they offered up alternatives. They said, "Think about this." We discussed it with them, back and forth. We put

some of those ideas—because, frankly, they were some good ideas—into the budget. That's a loyal opposition. That's a responsible opposition, not this, "We'll have nothing to do with you—no conversations about the budget," from the get-go. How can you say no before you've seen the document?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm going to take a couple of moments to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. There are a couple of things that I think need to be said and put on the record in terms of our approach to this budget.

For months we have, as a party and individually, led by our leader, Tim Hudak, put forward ideas that have been systematically rejected by this government. We were the ones who looked at the advice that was provided to you by Don Drummond and said, yes, a public sector wage freeze was the right thing to do. You said no. When we looked at various other areas of our economy and made suggestions, you said no. So it was pretty clear that nothing that we would propose would be something that you would consider.

The idea that we rejected it before we read it—I am quite willing to say that all of you agreed to say yes before you read it. I was in the lock-up; I was there. I was able to read and see what was in this budget. So my comments, then, come as a result of reading it. But our positions are very clear: We're interested in what we can do for the economy of this province.

My colleague from Burlington mentioned a startling set of statistics a moment ago. We all talk about the 600,000 people who woke up this morning looking for a job. But we also know that there are 400,000 people who are on social assistance and 200,000 people who have given up. So you're looking, then, at a significant portion of the population that needs some assistance, particularly in the area of providing a job. When people have a job, it gives security to their families. It means that they are able to participate in their own community. So the starting point has to be the question of a job.

I want to also talk for a moment about the macro issues that are in this document. Our leader has said, if you don't read anything else, it's page 221. And I think here, when you look at the figures on revenue and the figures on expenses and net debt, these are your legacy. This is what is being put on the backs of our children and grandchildren. We know that a child born today inherits \$20,000 worth of provincial debt. When you look at a revenue figure for this budget of \$116 billion and then you look at the total expense at \$127.6 billion, you know there's a problem.

And you know there's a problem when you move along to look at the net debt; that is the debt that continues to grow. Today, it is \$272 billion, and it will go in two years to \$303 billion. Now, I know that those are figures that are beyond, I think, the ability of most people like me to have an idea of. It's a lot of zeros. But the point is, when you then translate that into \$20,000 per

person in this province, and when you think of all the people like those I mentioned a moment ago who are unable to pay, it gives you a sense of how much of a burden this budget has presented to Ontarians.

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One of the other reasons that we said we wouldn't support it was simply in contrast to what we think is important. As I started to say a moment ago, the question of growing the economy to create good jobs—when I look in my own riding, and I have businesses that compete with a business, say, in Ohio, and they look at Ontario, in Bradford, Bradford-West Gwillimbury, they're looking at every possible way to be efficient. They're looking at the opportunities that new technology provides. They're looking at investments in their own staff and how those people can learn better and become more efficient and still have a job. Yet they find themselves in an untenable position. Why? Because they have to compete with the person in Ohio, with a business in Ohio, and the biggest single issue over which they have no control in Bradford is their hydro bill, the cost of energy in this province.

You might talk about holding taxes, but then there are all kinds of other things that government imposes on business, as well as individuals. The energy costs that this province is putting on the businesses and the residents of this province are frankly unconscionable. When you listen to many members who stand up, sadly more than once in many cases, to talk about the exodus of jobs from their community, this flies in the face of what you have suggested will be the future that comes from what you're doing. We don't see that. We see these people struggling with costs and they are unable to find ways to create more efficiencies.

I remember when the government used to talk about the value of conservation. If we just demonstrated our ability to conserve energy, well, it would be fine. Well, they don't talk too much about that anymore because it doesn't matter. The biggest cost is the cost that's been imposed upon us. When you look at the gas plant scandal and the kind of money that has been, frankly, just tossed away for that particular scandal and the fact that there was a way for the government to message it, that, "No, it really isn't taxpayers. No, it's really ratepayers." That's only one person with two pockets.

The kinds of things that we have said that we don't see the government interested in doing: simply reducing the size and cost of government. The fact is that we understand. We're not suggesting that we don't respect the work and the technology and the professionalism of people in the broader public sector, but we do know that one of the things that you have done over the last nine years is increase jobs in this province, and those are public sector jobs. Those are jobs, then, that we need to look at in terms of efficiencies. I go back to my employer who has done all the work on efficiency and still has to compete with hydro costs in the same way that we know there's overlap and duplication within government.

One of the other initiatives that we feel very strongly about is the question of cutting red tape. I want to give

you an example of what that means for individual businesses. I have two stories that come from my own riding, and one was a man who was having a paint booth built. Obviously there's a great many safety issues around a paint booth. He was working closely with the Ministry of the Environment and this was being built to their specifications, and everything was going fine until it came time to hang the door. Of course, the door had to be hung in a manner that would protect in the unlikely case of an explosion but the possibility, so that it would be harder to have that door blow out.

The Ministry of the Environment wanted the door hung one way, and then the Ministry of Labour came along and said, "Oh, you can't have the door that way. How would a person get out?" In an explosion, I'm sorry; the person isn't going to be able to get out. One hopes there's nobody there. But that's the kind of thing. So the door has to be hung one way for MOE and another way for the Ministry of Labour.

I have another example where the Ministry of Health has decreed the level of chlorine to be used in laundry, and the Ministry of the Environment has said, "No, that exceeds the strength of chlorine that we want used in the water." Again you have ministries that can't agree on their levels and their regulations.

Those are the kinds of things that simply drive people crazy. Sometimes many ministries show up. Those ministries may or may not come with any warning, and you are expected to drop everything and look after whatever it is that they want. I'm talking about people that are trying to make a living for whom this is non-billable time. These are people that have to scurry around and respond to these demands at an ever-increasing and ever-growing rate.

The other part of our plan is to look at lowering tax rates on job-creating businesses. I'm very interested in the part of the budget which talks about providing opportunities for young people. It talks about—I think it's almost \$300 million, but the Premier refers to this as interning; these people would have internships. Well, we have interns here, and there's a big difference between an intern and a job. So I think that it's a little bit—well, you could say it's more than optimistic that an internship is going to necessarily create a job. What creates a job is a demand for product and service, and what creates that demand is when people have money in their pockets. When people actually make a profit, they can expand their business, and if they can expand their business, they can also pay their taxes.

Modernizing our apprenticeship system is also something we feel very strongly about. There are numerous people in this province, particularly young adults, who would like to be in a trade and who understand the value, both monetarily and otherwise, of having that expertise. I am completely stymied as to why this government would refuse to look at ratios of one to one in this province. The reason I'm stymied is quite simple: because seven other provinces allow this; in fact, recognize—that's the rule they follow. What you're actually doing is making it more difficult for a young person in Ontario to become a

recognized, licensed tradesperson because of the ratio system, but they can come from somewhere else in the country with their qualifications being recognized—which I agree with—but they were able to get it more easily with a one-to-one ratio in their home province. That makes no sense whatsoever. I think you can appreciate that when you want to accuse us of not being able to support your budget, well, it's really simple not to be able to support your budget.

We look at the importance of job creation. I mentioned: That is the key to being able to afford. When someone has the confidence in the province that they can expand, that they can hire one more person, that takes that person off the welfare rolls. That gives the family the stability they need, the ability to pay the rent or have a mortgage. It also means that all of us are paying taxes, and when we pay taxes, that's how we are able to pay for the programs, health and education, and the infrastructure that we require and obviously benefit from.

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So when I look at this budget, I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed because there's not the recognition given to the importance of providing for people. Instead, we're looking at leaving behind the debt. We're leaving behind debt for our children.

Now, I wouldn't want to finish my remarks without mentioning the government's response to my private member's bill on the pooled registered pension plan. I was absolutely delighted to see this. I had recognized this some time ago, and I had asked the former Minister of Finance about his position. At the time, it was quite clear that the government was not interested. So I was very pleased to see that it is there. And I actually expected, when the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was reading the many, many kudos that he found, whether by cut and paste or otherwise, I don't know—that he didn't mention the support for the PRPPs, because certainly very strong indications had come from the Canadian Federation of

Independent Business as well as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

For people who don't know what the PRPP is, let me just take a moment. It stands for "pooled registered pension plan." People might want to ask, legitimately, "Well, don't we have methods by which people can save and have a pension?" This is simply adding to the suite of things that people can choose to do. One of the reasons why I felt it was particularly important to put it forward in the white paper was the fact that it would provide people who do not have a workplace pension and have difficulty saving, which we all do—saving isn't buying on sale, by the way, always. It was the fact that you could have something at your place of employment, and it ultimately would build into some kind of savings for you—it's in your name, and it will go with you to another employer.

The federal government created the framework legislation for each of the provinces to provide companion legislation, and so British Columbia and Saskatchewan have legislation in the works. Alberta and Quebec are not far behind. I always felt it was very important that Ontario get on board with this, because I think it would serve the needs of many, many people. Over 60% of the Ontario population have no pension other than—well, certainly have no workplace pension. So it's really something that I'm very pleased to see that the government included in the budget.

I just want to tie things together in the last moment that I have. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the budget. I think that from the analysis that I've provided, it should come to you as no surprise that we can't support it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 13 May 2013

Lundi 13 mai 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 mai 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm excited to welcome two friends from my riding: good family friend Mary Hamilton, from Glencoe, and also friend Sondra Sasse, from Wardsville. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Frank Klees: It is Community Living Day today at Queen's Park. The objective is to raise awareness toward issues faced by people with intellectual disabilities and their families. I'd like to extend a special welcome to my constituent Colleen Zakoor, from Newmarket, and Helen Clark, from Mount Albert.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to officially introduce a wonderful, opinionated, very dedicated, strong-working intern who is working at my office with me. I'm going to be losing her soon, but she's going to stay with me for a very long time because she has given me great laughs and great joy at my office. Her name is Lauren Tarasuk and she's here with her mother, Anna, and her father, Steven, from Sault Ste. Marie.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce and to welcome two good friends from the riding of Richmond Hill, Roozbeh Farhadi and Banafsheh Salim, visiting Queen's Park today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to introduce members from my community who are with Community Living in north Durham: Cathy Parker and Karen McKeown, as well as their friends Andrew Stewart, Jalissa Francis, Candace Castle and Angela Wakefield.

Furthermore, I'd like to introduce the group that is joining us from Community Living Oshawa/Clarington: Julie Neely, Crystal Little, Judy Quail, Caroline Kara, Patrick Grist and Jeffrey Dillon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm extremely proud to recognize Gabriel Demizio. He's a page here, and today he is the page captain. With us today is his entire family. We have his mother, Peggy Demizio; we have his father, Dean Demizio, who is also president of the Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce; we have his grandmother Regina Demizio; we have his grandfather Michael Demizio; and we have his grandmother Lynda Sawatzky.

I also have one special guest from Niagara Falls: Nancy Caruso.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Today, I have two constituents here in the audience. They are the aunt and uncle of Benjamin Comley, who is one of our pages. I'd like to welcome personally Bobbi Moore and Brad Shibish from Riverside South, in my riding, for coming all the way down to Queen's Park.

Of course, Speaker, I've got great news: The Ottawa Senators won the first round of the playoffs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, no. Actually your microphone was turned off, but you were still able to let everybody know.

The member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to introduce people who are here today for Madison Hogg, one of our distinguished pages. Her mother, Dianne Ryan, and her aunt, Marianne Ryan, are here in the gallery, and I hope we treat them well.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Mike Town from Community Living North Perth in Listowel. He's here with us today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome folks from my riding who are here today to talk to me about the crisis in special services at home. Mary MacLauchlan and Scott Legault, who receive support, and Rosa Amicarelli and Barry Keith, who work for Community Living.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome today Roxane Villeneuve Robertson from the great riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who is the daughter of former Minister of Agriculture Noble Villeneuve, who sat here about 10 years ago.

And just to remind everybody, the best game last night was the Wings going into the next round.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Kelly Lovell, a constituent of mine. She's a student from Western. She's taking a dual degree: medical science and honours business. This is her first time at Queen's Park. Please help me welcome her.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have some folks from Community Living in my riding here today in the west gallery: Justin Marr, Kerry Thomas and Richard Taylor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

The member from Newmarket—Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: I seek unanimous consent to ask a question of the leader of the official opposition. If granted, my question would be how he can possibly support the Boston Bruins over the Toronto Maple Leafs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It sounds like hockey brings us together and also separates us.

Interjection: That's deep.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know it is.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Before I begin, Speaker, I do want to extend, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Peter Worthington. The man was a giant in the media. He was a leader. He is a great Canadian, and he will be deeply, deeply missed in this province of Ontario.

1040

I have a question for the finance minister. Last year's budget by your predecessor claimed \$2 billion in annual savings from a wage freeze on all government workers. This year's budget removes any reference whatsoever to a mandatory wage freeze. Instead, you used soft terms like you propose to "work together to get outcomes."

I ask the finance minister, without a wage freeze how are you going to find those \$2 billion in annual savings?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I think he actually read part of the budget. Thank you. And he makes reference to the tone of working together, collaborating and working for the benefit of the people of Ontario. That's right.

That's exactly what we're doing, and we've proven that we've been able to control spending at below 1% year over year. It's why we exceeded our targets last year by \$5 billion. We've negotiated and collaborated with the broader public sector, and we're dealing with our compensation review by maintaining our envelope at zero. That's very clear in the budget.

We're working together for the benefit of people. You should be working with us as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Speaker, there's not much to work with in the finance minister's budget, quite frankly. You, sir, chose to increase the deficit. It should have gone down. You're piling on \$20 billion more in debt, putting more burden on the back of a newborn here in Ontario because you cannot make the decisions necessary to hold the line on spending. In fact, Minister, you've gone in the opposite direction by ramping up spending and throwing out the window even the small steps we finally got Premier McGuinty and Minister Duncan to come around to. That was an across-the-board mandatory wage freeze and arbitration reform.

I did read your budget in detail. With my economics background, Speaker, budgets are actually pleasure

reading for somebody like me, but I took no pleasure in the fact that he dropped the wage freeze altogether.

Why did you throw out a mandatory wage freeze that could save us \$2 billion a year and that you yourself had previously voted for?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The budget is all about creating jobs, helping people in their everyday lives and tackling and eliminating the deficit in a very pragmatic, practical way. We're not taking extreme positions. We're trying our utmost to collaborate and initiate those positive changes for the benefit of the people.

The Leader of the Opposition just talked about his economics background. Well, it's interesting because, not long ago, the critic for the opposition sent me a package of their projections—projections which would necessitate mathematics.

If I could give this to the page, please, and if he can provide it to the Leader of the Opposition.

Here are their projections. It is over \$1 billion off. It doesn't add up. He himself has been cut off by his own party for reckless spending. Now, with these projections that don't even equate, he's anticipating that he cannot only balance the budget a year earlier, he pretends that he's going to be able to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I really don't know what to say about the increasingly bizarre performance of the finance minister on a very basic question that, quite frankly, calls into question his competence to take on such an important matter of actually getting the books back into balance for the province of Ontario, making sure we reduce spending, not increase it so that the deficit actually comes down so that you can balance the books. But you've gone in the other direction.

That's clearly why the PC Party believes the only way to get Ontario back on track, to bring good jobs back to our province, to get government to live within its means, just like families do every day, is to actually change the team, change the government in the province of Ontario to get us back on track.

Let me try a third time, Minister. I appreciate anything you send across to me, but what I'd appreciate is a yes or no answer on a very basic question. If you want to write it down—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —you want to answer my question. How are you going to balance the books? Did you actually toss out the window a mandatory wage freeze, yes or no? Where do you find the \$2 billion?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the only bizarre issue here is the numbers presented by the opposition, which don't add up. He has put this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, this is in fact very serious. It requires serious leadership, and it requires numbers that add up. The member opposite has put forward a YouTube video that talked about their projections which don't equate by over \$1 billion. Furthermore, they're estimating that they're going to be able to balance the books, knowing the challenges ahead, by cutting their revenues by \$5 billion, and somehow they're going to be able to balance the books. That is fantasy, Mr. Speaker.

We on this side of the House are doing what's necessary to control our spending. We're being disciplined; we're being determined. We've proven that four years running. Next year's deficit projection is \$1 billion lower because of steps that we're taking. Read the budget. It's very clear what we're doing. You should be supporting it.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister. No, we're not going to support a Liberal budget that digs a hole deeper and costs jobs in the province of Ontario. My concern, again: the finance minister is not answering my question if he's cancelling the mandatory wage freeze where he'll find the \$2 billion that will dig the hole deeper. The word "arbitration" appears nowhere in the 300-plus words in the budget papers either, so you've obviously tossed out binding arbitration reform.

Given that you've tossed out two cost-control measures that we finally got your predecessor to come around to before they closed down the Legislature, why is it, Finance Minister, that you in fact go in the opposite direction with 20 new spending initiatives? How is that affordable when we're already deep in debt?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is very much a budget for Ontario by Ontarians. We have sought out a lot of input from a lot of people. We have a lot of issues that we share in common. There are a lot of fiscal matters that are before us. We're doing everything necessary to tackle and eliminate the budget and the deficit, and we're on target. We're on a path to balance, and it's very clear as to how we get there.

One of them is to maintain and restrain our compensation. We've made it clear that it's at zero going forward. We can work within that envelope, but what we need to do is be determined and be disciplined to control our spending growth, and we're doing that.

More importantly, the investments that are being made in our youth, in our infrastructure—that's stimulating jobs; that's stimulating economic growth; that is what's going to make us competitive in the long term; that you should be supporting, Mr. Speaker, because it's for the benefit of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's just be honest about this, Finance Minister. This is a budget written by the Liberals to buy NDP support. It's clearly a budget written to try to maintain your grip on power, to maintain your office space.

I think of the young graduates from college or university who are deep in tuition debt. They're back home with mom and dad with no job to go to. They thought they'd be better off by now, out on their own, buying their own home, their own career. This budget fails to help them because their budget goal is to buy support of the NDP to maintain office.

The last time we saw this, the last time we saw the Liberal-NDP coalition, we had a credit downgrade. We actually added on 48,000 jobs to the public sector payroll and lost 5,000 manufacturing jobs. Minister, people don't want to see a bidding war for more spending; they want to see an action plan for spending less. Why do you disagree?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is very much a budget about helping create jobs and promoting economic growth. It's very clear as to how we achieve that. It's also a budget about helping people in their everyday lives. So what's at stake, Mr. Speaker, is this: Here we are, helping rural and northern communities with a dedicated fund to help—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll rein it in.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Here we have a dedicated fund to help rural communities with their roads and bridges—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We also have a gas tax that we're making permanent and dedicated to the municipalities.

The member opposite just spoke about youth. He wants to cut off our youth fund, which is there to support an integration of businesses with young people, helping them build on their skills and provide for entrepreneurial training, and enabling them to succeed so that they can be at work more quickly for the benefit of their future. It's their future that's at stake. They should be supporting this budget for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, our plan will actually bring jobs back to the province of Ontario, good private sector career jobs so people can advance their skills, not a bigger government bureaucracy. There's an expression, Minister, that you've heard, I know, that says basically that time is money, and we're rapidly running out of both. You made a deliberate decision in your budget to dig the hole deeper. You're adding \$20 billion to the debt, and bizarrely you actually have made the deficit larger than the previous fiscal year. Quite frankly, this ongoing dance the last couple of weeks of budget bribery between the Liberals and the NDP—that's not going to bring one new job back to the province of—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know what I'm doing. It's on the edge, so I would ask him to be cautious of how he uses his words, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You've already caved in to \$1 billion in new spending for the NDP. This dance is continuing. You've not said no to date. Finance Minister, are you going to say no to any more spending that will dig the hole even deeper?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: We have over 400,000 net new jobs since the recession. We're taking steps in this budget to create even more jobs, and it has highlighted how we're going to achieve just that.

The opposition don't have a plan. Their plan is across-the-board cuts, a slash-and-burn policy that will hamper our economic recovery that is very sensitive right now. What is necessary is not more government, and I agree. It's about more opportunity, and we are providing more opportunity in this budget. We are doing transformational changes to help Ontarians succeed.

The member opposite, by his own admission, is more intent on creating havoc and destroying labour relations and enabling cuts that will hinder our recovery. We won't stand for that. We're there to support Ontarians right through.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start also, on behalf of New Democrats, by wishing our condolences to the friends and family of Peter Worthington and also, in fact, to Mr. Takhar, the member for—I don't know what his riding is, but the former minister, who of course has had a loss with his mother's death and is suffering some ill health. We wish him a speedy recovery, Speaker.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. People have had their faith shaken by scandals and billions of dollars of waste at eHealth, at Ornge and on the gas plants. Does the Deputy Premier agree that Ontarians are going to need to see something different than the same old status quo if they're going to be able to trust the government again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the people of this province really want is a decision to be made on whether this budget is moving forward or not. It is time for the leader of the third party to sit down with the Premier and talk about supporting this budget.

You know who's waiting? I can tell you who's waiting for these answers. We've got nine million drivers in this province who are waiting to see whether or not we're going to be addressing the cost of their insurance premiums. We've got 30,000 young people who are really struggling to find that first job, who are waiting for the leader of the third party to determine whether or not they're going to get the help they need to get established in their careers. Speaker, 46,000 seniors and their loved ones are waiting for the NDP, to find out whether they're going to get access to the home care that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would say there are over 13 million Ontarians who want to see a government they can trust for a change in this province.

New Democrats have been very clear: We are focused on delivering real results for families. People have heard governments make promises before, but they've seen those promises broken, and they're also seeing scarce resources wasted. They want to see a government that's truly accountable to them, and they want to see the tools in place that will ensure that accountability. Is the minister ready to consider this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we are absolutely ready to have that conversation that we've been waiting for a couple of months to have with the leader of the third party.

But in the meantime, other Ontarians are waiting for answers. You know who else is waiting? The parents of kids in low-income families, who are waiting to see whether or not the Ontario Child Benefit is going to be increased this year. People are waiting. Those almost one million children who benefit from the Ontario Child Benefit are waiting for an answer.

People on social assistance are waiting for an answer. Are they going to be able to keep more of their earnings? Are they going to be able to have that opportunity to move off social assistance and into employment, where they desperately want to go? They are waiting for an answer from the leader of the third party.

People in northern and rural communities are waiting for an answer. Are they going to get the money they need to take pressure off their municipal taxes, to build the roads, to build the bridges? People are waiting for an answer. It's time we had one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What people are waiting for are real results, and that's what New Democrats are determined to get them. Ontarians want to have their voices heard, and they told us that they don't think that the government has learned their lessons at eHealth, at Ornge and at the gas plants. They're worried that this government is going to go on wasting their money and then cutting important services to make up the difference. A financial accountability office could help us to stop these scandals before they start, and Ombudsman oversight into the health care system will stop the next chemotherapy crisis before it happens.

Does the Deputy Premier agree that more oversight is needed? Or does she think that the status quo is good enough for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that we move forward on accountability measures, and that's exactly what we are doing. I also think it's time for the leader of the third party to have that face-to-face conversation that the Premier has been asking for for some time. We can have the conversations in question period. We can have them through the media. I think it's time for that sit-down meeting. The people of this province are waiting for an answer. Are we going forward with the

initiatives in this budget that are very, very meaningful to everyday people in their everyday lives, or are we going to continue to play the game of let's play this out in the media and in question period? It's time for a decision, Speaker. The time is now.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier. Is the minister ready to give Ontario seniors in hospitals and those receiving home care access to the same oversight and protection as people have in our prison system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's very important that people, when they need health care, have the assurance that they are getting high-quality health care. People of this province deserve to know that they're getting the best value for the money that they're spending on health care, and that's why we are moving forward with transforming the way the health care system is funded and how health care is delivered.

Our budget really speaks to this, Speaker. We are moving resources into the community sector so people can get home care faster, the home care that they need, so they can get out of hospital, back home where they want to be, where they can stay home longer so that they don't have to move into long-term care prematurely. Speaker, this budget speaks to the health care needs of the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's Ombudsman provides accountability in our prison system, but he doesn't have oversight in our health care system. In every other province, provincial ombudspersons have the power to advocate for patients and provide them with accountability. Will the minister consider doing the same for Ontario patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the Premier has said, the leader of the NDP has put forward some interesting ideas and she wants to talk about those ideas. It's time to have that face-to-face conversation. We've responded to a number of the NDP requests that overlap with our priorities too because we are absolutely committed to addressing issues that are facing the people of this province. The leader of the third party continues to add to the list of requests. I think it's time for a conversation between the Premier and the leader of the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's disturbing. I really don't think that the Deputy Premier gets it. Families watched as governments dropped the ball at Ornge and wasted \$1 billion at eHealth helping their friends. Then Ontarians watched as over 1,000 people were given the wrong cancer medication. Now the government's promising that they're going to hit a target of five days' wait time for home care and that the quality of hospital care is not going to suffer as hospitals close facilities and lay off staff.

Will the minister admit that people actually deserve some real oversight, some real accountability, when it comes to their health care system and give the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to provide that accountability for patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, the Premier has acknowledged that the leader of the third party has some interesting ideas that she's continuing to put forward, and she's prepared to have that conversation where it belongs: in a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the third party. In the meantime, we need to move forward with this budget because people are counting on us to get this job done.

1100

There are people who are waiting too long for home care. We acknowledge that, and we're on our way to addressing that challenge through this budget: 46,000 more people. Think about that for a minute: 46,000 more people will be able to access the home care they need so they can get back on their feet faster, they can get home from hospital faster, and they can avoid going into long-term care. But we need this budget to pass to be able to increase that access to home care.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Premier likes to take credit for starting the auditor's investigation into the Oakville debacle. But the truth of the matter is, our public accounts committee tried to get the auditor to probe both Mississauga and Oakville last September 5. However, the Liberal members blocked that through procedures in committee. They ran the clock out on the committee, allowing only the Mississauga investigation. We should have known then just how bad Oakville was going to be.

The truth is that if it weren't for the Liberal tactics followed by prorogation, we'd have the auditor's report on Oakville by now. The Liberal Party continues to put their own interests ahead of taxpayers' and must be put to a test of confidence.

Will you support our motion for non-confidence to be held in this Legislature?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to inform members that on February 7 of this year, the new Premier—in fact, she had just become the new Premier—wrote to the Auditor General and asked him to look into the Oakville situation. I would also remind members that it was the new Premier who offered a select committee on this issue, which they rejected in favour of a witch hunt against a former member of the Legislature. It was the new Premier who asked Liberal members of the committee to put forward a motion to have a very wide document search across this province; to my astonishment, Mr. Speaker, that very member, his colleagues and the colleagues in the New Democratic Party voted against it.

The Premier has been forthcoming. She has appeared in front of the committee, something we haven't heard from the Leader of the Opposition yet. I understand he may be there tomorrow morning; we certainly look forward to that. But there are no apologies when it comes to the openness of the Premier of this province when it comes to this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's amazing how the Liberals talk about the race to the moon but lead the race to the bottom. The Liberal record on these gas plant cancellations is telling: a snap decision 11 days before an election to save Liberal seats, side deals totalling tens of millions of dollars to keep the proponents from exposing you, a deliberate move to withhold documents requested by members of this House and, finally, sworn testimony of documents being destroyed.

If this is the Liberal idea of responsible government, I can tell you no one else in Ontario shares that view. This scandal should not be rewarded, certainly not by the third party. Will you bring our non-confidence motion to the floor this week?

Hon. John Milloy: When the honourable member spoke about a snap decision before an election to support the cancellation of the plant, I think he was talking about his own party because, if I recall correctly, it was the Leader of the Opposition, the star of that famous YouTube video, who came out and talked about their support for the cancellation of the project. It was the candidates in the various ridings that were affected who put out robocalls, dropped leaflets, put out press releases and put out statements on Twitter saying the only way to see the end of this plant was to elect the Progressive Conservatives to government.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is why? Why are they blocking their own candidates from coming before the committee so that they can answer questions about why they made that decision, what motivated that decision and the type of costing that was put in place? As I said, we may hopefully see the Leader of the Opposition in front of the committee tomorrow, and we look forward to him discussing with us why he made that decision and why he so aggressively opposed the plant in Mississauga.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week, I asked the minister for details about his government's plan to implement high-occupancy toll lanes, but I don't think I got an answer, so I'm going to ask it again.

The KPMG report to Metrolinx said it costs about \$700,000 to implement one kilometre of high-occupancy toll lanes. That means we're talking about over \$300 million to create 450 kilometres of HOT lanes, and that's if everything goes perfectly.

But Metrolinx puts the initial revenue from HOTs at a mere \$25 million a year and says that the HOT lanes are not a significant source of revenue for transit. Why is the

province building a risky, costly and complicated new payment system for the sake of a mere \$25 million a year?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The budget elaborates two things. The budget elaborates a very dramatic expansion of HOV lanes, which are for high-occupancy vehicles only. The budget also says that we are going to explore and develop—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I guess the race for the bottom is continuing, Mr. Speaker.

We're also looking at HOT lanes. We are looking at the experiences of other jurisdictions. In some places, they've been very successful at alleviating congestion in certain conditions. We are not rushing into anything. We are carefully looking at the experience of other jurisdictions.

Metrolinx will be looking at the optimum implementation of these in locations and places where they make sense. HOT lanes also serve the full purposes of an HOV lane, in addition to opening it up to additional drivers in certain situations. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I mentioned that it would cost over \$300 million to implement the government's new tolling scheme if everything goes perfectly well.

But such schemes have not gone perfectly with this government, and I'm reminded of Presto. Presto was originally budgeted at \$250 million, but the costs have now ballooned to over \$700 million—a big cost to the taxpayer, but a wonderful benefit to the government's partners in the private sector. We have already begun the process of integrating Presto with the TTC.

Why should we believe that the government's new tolling scheme will not join eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants scandal and Presto on the growing list of this government's wasteful private sector misadventures?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This government's spending on services is the lowest per capita in Canada, which means that it's lower than in any of the provinces in which the third party is in power.

Second, the HOT lane proposals have not been developed yet. There has been no preparation in detail about where or how or what technologies would be used, so it's a little premature to jump to those conclusions.

Finally, I remember the good old days when my friends in the NDP liked transit, when they actually understood that subways and LRTs actually cost money. We have—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order, please.

Please finish.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know the official opposition really gets a little cranky when we talk about subways, because their only record in doing them is filling them in. They like to say they like GO transit; they just never fund it.

If we're actually going to deal with the congestion problems, governments are going to have to be honest with the people of Ontario and work with them to find the right funding tools to move this forward. This party will do—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The 2013-14 Ontario budget is a forward-looking document that moves Ontario steadily toward a balanced budget. Much of the conversation on the budget has focused on issues affecting cities and southern Ontario municipalities such as Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Windsor, Kingston and Ottawa.

The Ontario budget is also a document that speaks to the concerns of northern Ontarians. Northern needs include stable and affordable electricity, secure jobs and a reliable infrastructure.

Would the minister tell the House what Ontario's budget does to help municipalities in northern Ontario become stronger, more sustainable and more prosperous places to live, work and raise a family?

1110

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank my colleague for the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's far too much interaction going on between the ways and also within themselves. Please bring it down. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Again, Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague for the question. I'd like to reassure this chamber that our government listens to all of the people of Ontario. We continued that dialogue last Friday when I and the ministers of natural resources, northern development and mines, rural affairs and aboriginal affairs and the Premier attended the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities' 53rd annual conference and general meeting, which was held in Parry Sound. We let them know that we heard their concerns.

That's why, if the parties opposite support our budget, in 2013-14 we will spend \$553 million on northern highways, create a \$1-million fund for small rural and northern municipalities to help them build roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure, and spend \$360 million to extend the northern industrial electricity rate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, northern Ontarians need an update on how this province has acted to reverse the downloading of the 1990s. Have these costs been uploaded again to the province, where they belong, and removed from the tax base of northern Ontario municipalities, where they never belonged? What does the recent Ontario budget mean for northern Ontario municipalities and the pressure they face on their municipal tax bases? Would you give property owners, ratepayers and mem-

bers of the more than 400 municipal councils in northern Ontario an indication of what the 2013-14 Ontario budget holds in store for them?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member again for the question. I firmly believe in what the Premier has said numerous times: In order for Ontario to be prosperous, all of our communities need to be prosperous. That's why we've continued our conversation with northern municipalities about how we can help them out. We've heard what they've told us and we've acted.

That's why, in 2012-13, northern Ontario municipalities will benefit from \$337 million in municipal supports through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund and from our commitment to uploading. This means real relief for municipal budgets. It's taking a huge burden off property taxes across the north. Our budget will continue to provide assistance to northern communities and for all municipalities across Ontario. I look forward to working with 444 municipalities across the province to learn how we can better help them become stronger and more prosperous.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Finance. We know that the Premier is now preparing to give further ground to the New Democrats in secret budget vote negotiations, and we know that her government passed out a checklist of NDP demands on budget day. We know that the Premier likes to keep secret negotiations and backroom deals after we saw what happened with the gas plants and, of course, teacher union bosses.

Given all that, can you tell us here today how much more spending we can expect in order for the New Democratic Party to prop up your government up?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're very clear that our spending is being controlled. It's being disciplined. It's less than 1%, year over year. It's how we're achieving results.

My question to the member opposite: How do you justify a leader who has put out information from your party that talks about these very issues that you're telling me, and it doesn't add up? You're promoting numbers that don't equate, and you want the legitimacy of somehow telling the people of Ontario that you can lead when you can't even add. Answer me that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm quite comfortable standing behind Tim Hudak when he becomes Premier of Ontario in a few short months. The only spending that's being controlled today in this assembly is by the New Democratic Party. They're telling you what to spend on, and you're saying, "Yes; I'll give you a little bit more." This is an NDP budget for the NDP so that this government can be propped up.

Let's talk for a second about the economy. There's an old expression: "It's the economy, Sousa." Let's get back on track here.

Let's be perfectly honest here. This is a government that only values democracy insofar as it saves their own

political skins. After negotiations with rogue union leaders, we know that there is not enough money in this world that they can say no to. We know that they only value the truth when they have been caught.

I want to know: What dirty deal has this government cooked up with the NDP in order for the NDP to continue calling the shots and for this government to continue to be propped up?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The only deal we're making here is a deal with the people of Ontario. This is a budget that speaks to the people of Ontario, the contributions that they have made, because what they want is leadership and what they don't want are extreme views. They do not want to see an excessive slash-and-burn policy that puts things at risk, and they do not want excessive spending. They want control and they want discipline. We're offering that.

Mr. Speaker, it is about the economy. The members opposite don't seem to understand that the economy's recovery is challenged and we need to take steps to stimulate that growth. So there are occasions when you have to provide support for our youth, for our infrastructure, for those most vulnerable, for the things that we all share in common in this House. It boggles my mind that you would put that at risk. You should be supporting this budget.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. As racetracks across Ontario close down, it's clear that your OLG privatization plan is in shambles. One day Toronto's getting a special deal to host a downtown casino, the next day it isn't. One day there's a transition program for the horse racing industry, the next day there's a new committee that's going to start the process all over again.

Will this government admit that its OLG privatization strategy was a disaster from day one and that it's time to put a complete stop to this mess?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we all know that transforming OLG is an essential part of trying to enhance our revenue, support our schools and our education, and ensure that we continue to be socially conscious and socially responsible in those initiatives. This modernization plan is on the right track to take those and to deliver on that promise.

But in regard to transition around racing and in regard to our transition around service delivery, we need to be methodic, we need to be careful. We recognize that those initiatives were initially brought forward by the opposition in terms of an OLG component, but now we need to transform them. We're taking those appropriate steps to ensure that we protect the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I really don't think the government has any clue what they're doing in terms of their modernization strategy, because rural Ontario has been dealt a massive blow with the decision to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program. Thousands of jobs have been lost in rural Ontario and thousands more will be lost in the near future. Meanwhile, the OLG invited gambling operations to bid on a downtown casino and tried to entice Toronto city council members with a sweetheart deal on a hosting formula.

Will this government admit that its privatization plan is a complete disaster and end this sorry spectacle once and for all?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Our government is committed to a sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. We appointed three very distinguished former members of this House. The honourable Elmer Buchanan—he served on the benches over there, one of Ontario's most successful ag ministers, from 1990 to 1995. I actually spoke to Mr. Buchanan last Saturday—I was in Havelock, Ontario, for Celebrate Havelock—and Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Snobelen and Mr. Wilkinson are doing an incredible job to provide a framework—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex asked the question. I'm sure he wants to hear the answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —to sustain horse racing in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my friends opposite to join me this Saturday at Kawartha Downs in Peterborough for the first race. I recommend that they bet Yankee Nick in the sixth. I think that's a very hot prospect.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Across Ontario and in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, we are concerned about aboriginal youth, who are recognized as Canada's fastest-growing potential workforce. Almost half of aboriginal peoples—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—in Canada are under the age of 24.

Constantly, we're hearing the concerns of high drop-out rates for First Nations youth living off-reserve—Métis and Inuit youth are 22.6%, more than two and a half times the rate of non-aboriginal youth. We need to ensure that all youth have an equal and fair opportunity to be successful. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister inform the House what Ontario is doing to narrow this gap?

1120

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. Properly educating and providing for the proper education and closing the education gaps between our aboriginal communities, both on and off reserves, is absolutely crucial to developing the health and well-being of the aboriginal community.

In that regard, I was in Winnipeg about a month ago at the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. Ontario had chaired that for the past four years; Manitoba is the chair this year. One of the issues we discussed at that conference was this whole issue of closing the dropout rates, and the educational achievement metrics of aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. There was a recognition across the board by all of the provinces and all of the territories that this had to be done. This was the right thing to do. But you know, Speaker, who was missing from that meeting in Winnipeg was the federal government. The federal government was not there. This is a gap—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: It's good to know that action is taken on this very important issue.

Another very important issue is violence against—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, I've been tolerant of you continually shouting people's names out, and I'm not going to be tolerant any longer. Would you please either call them by their title or their riding? Thank you.

Ms. Soo Wong: Another very important issue is violence against aboriginal women and girls. I heard that about 15% of aboriginal women in Canada who had a spouse or a common-law partner in the past five years reported being a victim of spousal violence—more than twice the proportion among non-aboriginal women. I read that missing and murdered aboriginal women represent about 10% of female homicides in Canada, despite the fact that aboriginal women make up only 3% of the total female population in Canada. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is Ontario doing to address this issue in Ontario and in the national context?

Hon. David Zimmer: First, let me put a human face to those statistics. At a recent meeting—I think it was in Sault Ste. Marie, and we heard about this in Winnipeg. There was a meeting of some 231 women. The speaker at that conference asked the non-aboriginal women to stand up, and about 200 of them stood up. Then she said, "Please raise your hand if any of you have had a sister, a grandmother or a wife who has been murdered?" One person put up their hand. She then asked the 31 aboriginal women in the audience to stand up and asked the same question: "Of the 31 of you, how many have a female relative who has been murdered or is missing?" Of the 31 who stood up, 29 raised their hands—29 out of 31; one out of 200 for the non-aboriginal community.

This is a tragedy. This has to stop. The Aboriginal Affairs Working Group in Winnipeg has called for a national inquiry into this issue of violence and missing aboriginal women. Ontario is pleased to support that call.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Deputy Premier: I was at US Steel Nanticoke last night. One thousand Steelwork-

ers are locked out—the third lockout in three years between Lake Erie and the Hamilton works. One thousand steel jobs support 4,000 others, and up to 9,000 jobs can be affected. Ontario has already lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Look at London.

Deputy Premier, what are you doing about these lockouts? A government mediator was involved. I asked your government, what does the mediator do? And I was told that can't be divulged. What is he doing? What are you doing? Have you talked to the company? Have you talked to the union? What steps are you taking to get Steelworkers back to work?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for raising an important question. As we all know, some negotiations are very challenging and some take place in the public eye. I want to commend all those who represent employers and unions at the negotiating table who have come together to develop a strategy that could work for both of them.

We know that agreements that are reached around the negotiating table are the best ones, and we really encourage, in this situation, both parties to come back to the table. As the member opposite noted, a Ministry of Labour mediator has been engaged in the negotiations. The mediator has been assisting the parties and has met with the parties on seven different occasions.

Our services are still available. We encourage the parties to come back to the negotiating table. We are willing to facilitate that conversation and come out with a negotiated settlement that will be in the best interests of all parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ontario has 600,000 people out of work. Jobs are fleeing the province: Look at London, 9.9% unemployment; Caterpillar closed Electro-Motive and moved to Indiana; now they're closing Toronto and moving to Michigan. And here we have the third US Steel lockout in three years. What have you learned from that? What have you done?

I've been talking to the union, I've been talking to the company. We have government for a reason. Will you personally pull all sides together—at least call a meeting personally? The steel business has changed. Your approach has not changed. You're getting rusty. Please explain: What are you doing to deal with this new reality, not only in the steel business but in Ontario's manufacturing in general?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite knows exactly how the labour relations process works, where both parties need to come together at their own will around the table and be able to negotiate a settlement.

I think the member opposite also knows the role of the government or that of the Ministry of Labour is to mediate or facilitate that conversation, and our mediators are available. They have participated in the process on seven different occasions and they are willing to get the parties back, but both parties have to agree to do so.

Now, what's concerning is the approach that the party opposite continues to raise, and that is their right-to-work-for-less strategy. We know, Speaker, that approach does not work either, so I ask the member to stop advocating for a system that will take a race to the bottom for workers, and ensure that we have a robust labour relations process, like we have in the Ontario Labour Relations Act. I encourage both parties, in the case of US Steel Canada Lake Erie Works, to come together and negotiate a final settlement.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Just over a week ago in London, Andrea Horwath and I met with a group of distraught Londoners who are the victims of yet another damaging cut to health care. Despite all the talk about health care transformation, this Liberal government's cuts to health care have led to the closure of St. Joseph's hydrotherapy pool, a unique and vital therapy service for patients.

Will the minister explain how she can encourage people to be active, then cut this hydrotherapy program with no regard for the consequences?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member from London—Fanshawe for that question. This hospital, of course, is in my riding so I know this issue well.

We are embarking on a very important and serious transformation of our health care system. We are committed to moving services that are currently delivered in hospital to the community whenever possible. We're changing how we fund hospitals so that going forward, hospitals are going to get the money—their budget is going to depend on how many people they serve, what their community is and how many actual procedures they perform. There are changes under way. It's all about delivering the best possible, highest-quality care in the most appropriate place.

Hospitals are making difficult decisions; I understand that. But the goal is better care for the people of this province, and that includes the people of London.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: St. Joseph's hydrotherapy pool is health care too. Patients in London and across Ontario want to see accountability in our health care system—accountability measures like Ombudsman oversight over the health care system, which would prevent harmful cuts like this one.

Will the minister please explain to Londoners why her government can spend billions of dollars recklessly on scandals like eHealth, Ornge and the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants but can't afford to keep St. Joseph's hydrotherapy pool open?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite unfortunately is not looking at the whole picture. This budget that we have presented in this House, that her party is so far dithering on whether or not they will sup-

port, speaks to improving health care for the people of this province, including the people she represents.

1130

This budget expands home care to 46,000 more Ontarians. This is the kind of transformation that we must all support, because our constituents, the patients of this province—if they're ready to go home from hospital, that's where they want to be, and we need to be there to support them at home. People want to be home. They want to be able to be in the comfort of their own community with the people that they love. This budget is going to help more people get the care they need so they can be where they want to be.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in a few weeks families in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville are going to be celebrating the fact that young men and women are about to graduate from universities and colleges. Regardless of whether they are graduating from a university or a college, I know that these kids are really well positioned for the job market because they have a post-secondary education.

But, Minister, not every young graduate wants to look for a job. Instead, they want to go into business for themselves. What I want to know is—if you're going into business for yourself, you cannot be worried about having to pay your OSAP loan. I'd like to know what this government is doing to help young entrepreneurs defer payment on their OSAP loans.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a really good question. There's nothing more inspiring than this new, next generation of young Ontario entrepreneurs coming out of our colleges and universities.

When you see some of these young people and you go around the world, they're seen as some of the best and brightest young entrepreneurs anywhere in the world today. When you think about starting a business up as you're graduating from university, it's not only tough physically; it's tough financially as well. So we want to give our young entrepreneurs a break.

The 2013 budget will, if passed, allow graduates choosing to start a business in Ontario to defer paying off OSAP loans and payment of interest until one year after completing post-secondary education, rather than the standard six-month grace period. This will support young entrepreneurs across the province as they work to build their careers, turning them from job seekers to job creators. But we need to get this budget passed in order to achieve that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer and for making sure that our young people have the opportunity not just to seek jobs but also to create jobs.

But there's also a lot of young people looking for jobs in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, and I know

that this government has been working hard to help these young, bright graduates. Can the minister tell this Legislature what we are doing to help young graduates find jobs?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. One of the barriers our graduates and young people face upon entering the job market is lack of experience. It's the old adage we've heard before: You can't get a job without experience and you can't get experience without having a job. So it's kind of tough. They're kind of in that no-win situation.

We need to take action to help our young people get the opportunity to enter the workforce. This is a top priority in our 2013 budget. I urge all members on all sides of the House to pass this budget, because our budget will launch Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, including a youth employment fund of \$195 million over two years. The province would provide hiring incentives to employers to offer young people in all regions of the province an entry point to long-term employment. The fund would use Employment Ontario's extensive network of employment and training services across the province to find appropriate job placements. We've got to get this budget passed, though, in order to implement this.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Four months ago, Liberal insiders and special interests coronated Ontario's Premier. At that time, Ontario's unemployment stood at 565,000 people. Fast forward to today and, sadly, you will know that Ontario's unemployment situation is even more dismal. Worse still, over the past 12 months Ontario's government sector has grown by 48,000 people, but we haven't added one net new job to the Ontario economy. In fact, during this time we've lost over 5,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs, which the Premier often refers to as a myth.

Do you think it's right to force unemployed Ontario residents to pay for your political decision to move gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville to save a few Liberal jobs and buy the last election?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know he might not say it in here, but I know outside of the Legislature the member opposite believes that we're on the right track in this province. The reality is—and he knows this—that last month alone, we created 9,000 new manufacturing jobs in this province. The member opposite knows as well that in the last few years since—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: So not only 9,000 new manufacturing jobs last month alone created in this province, but we're on the right track because we've created over 400,000 new jobs since the bottom of the recession. We've brought back all of the jobs that were lost and 50% more. Compare that with other jurisdictions, like the

United States, which has only brought back 70% of their jobs; we're doing better than the United States. We're doing better than the Great Lakes states around us as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well clearly, minister, you need to get out of Queen's Park more.

Speaker, back to the Deputy Premier: Sadly the numbers in London are even more devastating. The unemployment rate in London soared from a dismal 8.6% in January to a devastating 9.9% last month, giving London the highest big-city unemployment rate in the country for the second month in a row. In Windsor, the unemployment rate is now at 9.2%.

Minister, the stats don't lie. Job creators in southwestern Ontario no longer have confidence in your Liberal government's ability to help create jobs and grow our economy. With one in 10 London residents unemployed, do you think it's right to ask unemployed Londoners to pay for your political decision to move the Oakville and Mississauga power plants and buy Liberal seats in the last election?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I know just how difficult it was for the member opposite to actually express that question, because he knows as well as I do that the reason we created the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund was to address important issues like this. I hate to embarrass him, but I've got to bring up again that the first project that was funded, in fact, by the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, a fund that the members in the official opposition voted against, was in your riding. I'm sorry; it was in your riding. It was in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I'm so proud that Lambton Conveyor, with support from the Ontario government through this very fund, is not only doubling its workforce, but it is contributing to an important local economy, and I know the member opposite in his heart of hearts agrees with me.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On Saturday, the weatherman was calling for snow across northeastern Ontario, and heavy snow is not uncommon in May in our part of the world. In Timmins, they got 26 centimetres.

The OPP closed many highways across the north after a dozen accidents. Fortunately there were no fatalities. There were a couple of cruisers in the ditch. They didn't close the highways because of the snow; they closed the highways because of a total lack of snow clearing. There was no snowplowing. There was one snowplow between Highway 144 and Matheson. That's an area bigger than some countries. There was no maintenance at all. Once again, snow in the spring is not that uncommon.

This is the second time that we've had to ask this question. Are the contracts not up to snuff? Are the contractors not following the rules? Are they not being paid enough? Or is the privatization scheme—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will be very, very happy to review what happened on the weekend. I appreciate the member's question; I think it was sincerely asked.

It was very unusual weather this weekend, Mr. Speaker. In my neighbourhood, we had hail three times and rain and snow. This was not the kind of weather that one is used to.

Mr. Speaker, I have raised this when I was meeting with mayors in the north, and they have all said to me very clearly that this was one of the most difficult winters for municipal snow removal services because of the irregularity of the weather and the challenges of the weather. So we know we've been dealing with some difficult matters, Mr. Speaker, but I do take the member's question as a sincere one. I will look into it and get back to him. I appreciate him raising it.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on a point of order.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to correct my record. Earlier I spoke, in an answer to the member, with regard to a \$1-million fund for small, rural and northern municipalities to build roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. In fact, our budget speaks to \$100 million to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order; members are allowed to correct their record.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

WEARING OF POPPIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I would ask for unanimous consent this afternoon, when we do the tribute to the Hon. John M. Turner, that we wear poppies for that tribute as he served in the RCAF from 1939 to 1945 and flew 30 missions over Europe in a Halifax bomber. So I'd ask for unanimous consent to wear the poppy during his tribute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand that there have been poppies made available—they will be made available.

Before I ask for unanimous consent, just to bring clarity, the office contacted the Legions at my request, and the Legions apparently have given permission to do so under some circumstances. In this case, I would remind us that the poppies should be worn above everything, meaning if you have pins on or if you have anything else, the poppy is the highest to be worn.

Point of order on—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Further on this: The poppies need to be worn on the correct side, which is the left side, and the highest emblem on the lapel or any other aspect that people may be wearing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: If I could just continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll continue on. I want to get this right.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Mr. Fred Rathburn, who's president of Branch 52 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Peterborough. Mr. Turner was a member of that Legion, and they very graciously supplied the poppies for everybody today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With the clarity offered by the member from Oshawa, do I have unanimous consent to wear the poppy during the tribute? Agreed? Agreed.

It's now time for introduction of guests.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a number of guests from Oshawa Community Living. We have Julie Neely, Patrick Grist, Judy Quail, Crystal Little, Caroline Kara and Jeffrey Dillon joining us this afternoon.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome the students from North American Muslim Foundation, the Islamic Academy. They're here with us this afternoon, and I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome a group from Community Living Tillsonburg, who are here with us today. In the gallery are Michael Kadey, Joanne Maertens, Gary Pidgeon, Sandra Bray, Della Derrough and Crystal Saunders. We want to welcome them all here to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Joining us today in the members' gallery as part of Community Living Ontario are: Rick Strutt, vice-president of Community Living Ontario; Alan McWhorter, interim executive director; Chris Beesley, incoming executive director; Gordon Kyle, director of social policy and government relations; Sheila Kirouac, communications director; and Yvonne Spicer, who's the self-advocate on the Community Living Ontario Council. I'm sure we'd all want to welcome them here today.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to introduce my guests and welcome them to Queen's Park; from Community Living Owen Sound and District: Tara Einoff, Shawna Shank, Karen Aspinall and Michael Drvodelic.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased today to welcome to Queen's Park from Walkerton Community Living on the 15th anniversary or annual reception—we have Harv and Dave Benninger and Linda Batte.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I too wish to welcome Yvonne Spicer to the Legislature today. She's here on behalf of Halton Community Living. We had a meeting this afternoon, and she does a super job of advocating.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to a very important issue that has affected a number of communities in my riding, as well as across central Ontario. The effects of the recent floods have caused significant damage to the property of local residents, businesses and many cottages.

While the towns of Huntsville and Bracebridge are preparing to make claims to the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, there are immense challenges facing these and other small communities already. I feel that Bracebridge's deputy mayor, Rick Maloney, sums up the local sentiment when he recently commented that the current program left a bad taste in his mouth, to kind of reconcile that the ability of people to get back on their feet rests with the generosity of bake sales and barbecues.

The current conditions of ODRAP rely heavily on matching provincial funds to local fundraising efforts. This is an extremely heavy burden to place on small rural communities that reported damages running well into the millions. As well, it would take months for these communities to receive relief funds, due to the current structure of ODRAP, which was created in the 1960s. Surely there is room for improvement within this program to better meet the needs of Ontarians requiring assistance through disaster relief.

At this time, I would like to add my voice in support of my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and the motion she put forward requesting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing undertake a review of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program in order to better meet the needs of communities that are adversely impacted by extreme weather events.

LYNNE WOOLSTENCROFT

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today I would like to recognize with great sadness the passing of Lynne Woolstencroft this morning at the age of 69. Lynne was a former mayor of Waterloo, a three-term city councillor, chair of the Waterloo Region District School Board, and president of the Association of Large School Boards. She was also a dear friend.

I had the pleasure of knowing Lynne on both a professional and personal level. She was warm, open and a true leader for our community. It was during her term as mayor that planning and agreements for the Perimeter Institute, the Centre for International Governance Innovation and the University of Waterloo's research and technology park began.

Just this past March, Lynne was honoured with the Jack Young Civic Award, the highest honour awarded by the region of Waterloo for those who exemplify the highest standards of political and civic life. She also received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her outstanding contribution to the community and the region.

Lynne was well known for her commitment to making government more accessible. She served as chair of the region's first environment committee during her 12 years representing the city of Waterloo at the regional council.

Over the course of her career, she inspired many young women to enter political life, myself included.

I would like to offer my deepest condolences to Lynne's husband, Peter Woolstencroft, and to the rest of her family and friends during this difficult time.

Thank you, Lynne, for your dedication to the environment, to education and to our community. You set an example of service that we should all aspire to. Your voice and your passion will be dearly missed.

GUL NAWAZ

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mississauga lost a strong, generous, passionate community leader this past weekend, and Liberals and Conservatives lost a decent, honest, principled chartered accountant in Gul Nawaz. Allah called him home Saturday afternoon, May 11, while working at his desk.

Gul Nawaz obtained his chartered accountant designation 40 years ago and was a leader among his peers, serving as the president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. He was honoured for his contributions to the CA profession with his FCA fellowship among chartered accountants, a rare honour.

Gul's community and board governance contributions are as long as they are distinguished. Gul has helped the Mississauga Arts Council, the Credit Valley Hospital, Peel Multicultural Council, Canadian Spectrum, Sheridan and Etobicoke colleges, and the University of Toronto at Mississauga. And, Speaker, that's only a partial list.

Gul stood as a federal Alliance candidate in the November 2000 election, and although he did not win that election, Gul Nawaz got my vote. He was our provincial Liberal riding association auditor. He was my constituent, and he was a friend of mine and Andrea's.

His native land of Pakistan was always important to Gul Nawaz, who worked constantly to build better ties between Canada and Pakistan.

Our heartfelt sympathies to Gul's wife, Ghazala, and to his family and his many, many friends. The legacy of Gul Nawaz Zindabad. Thank you, Speaker. Shukria.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize the Reid's Corners Women's Institute in my riding of Huron-Bruce on the celebration of their 100th anniversary this Wednesday, May 15.

Women's Institutes have been in existence across the country for 115 years, since it was founded in Stoney Creek, Ontario, in February 1897.

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Over the years, the Women's Institute has worked hard to lobby for some of the very things we use every day. Because of their outstanding lobbying efforts, we

now have pasteurized milk, painted lines on the road, school bus signs, the flashing red lights on the school buses, bags for bread and small-town abattoirs.

Women's Institutes are well known for their fundraising and community service efforts. Specifically, Reid's Corners Women's Institute members have raised funds, knitted and sent clothing in support of our troops, the Red Cross and hospitals overseas. They also support countries ravaged by national disasters.

The Reid's Corners Women's Institute is very active locally as well. Through fundraising efforts, they support local fall fairs, local hospitals and other events in the community. Their monthly meetings give the ladies a chance to come together and socialize and plan for their next fundraising efforts and community events.

Women's Institutes play an important role across rural Ontario, and I'm very pleased to take this opportunity here in the Ontario Legislature to recognize the Reid's Corners Women's Institute on their milestone 100th anniversary.

CITIZENS' AWARDS

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week, outstanding local citizens were recognized with Stoney Creek Citizen of the Year awards for their unwavering contributions to our community.

Citizen of the Year Bill Needham is a volunteer coach, official and instructor in youth, men's and ladies' hockey and slo-pitch. He's also an OHL scout and a multiple sports mentor.

Honour student Gagandeep Virdi, Junior Citizen of the Year, has done 754 community volunteer hours. This list of activities that she has been involved in humbles those of us many years older.

Jayne Industries co-owners Duncan Robson and Chris Cashin received the Outstanding Large Business Award for donating to the food banks, ALS, MS, Sick Kids, and minor hockey, soccer and baseball teams.

Bobby Assadourian's Triple R Inc. received the small business award. Bobby has helped home owners avoid renovation rip-offs; written a renovation book, giving the proceeds to the March of Dimes; hosts a TV show; hires youth at risk, training them in contracting, renovations and life skills.

iMatter received the Community Recognition Award for taking care of teen mental health at Cardinal Newman high school.

McDougall's Garage, established in 1918, received the Legacy Award. It began as a carriage/blacksmith garage, and the first single-bay garage was built in the 1960s.

Josh Tiessen received the 2012 young entrepreneur award. As well as being an accomplished artist, he founded the Josh Tiessen Foundation to coordinate his endeavours for the community.

I thank all of these role models for their ongoing community involvement. I'm proud to represent them in our riding and here at Queen's Park.

ANNIVERSARY OF ROMANOV DYNASTY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On May 7 last week, I was pleased to take part in a ceremony at Queen's Park marking the 400th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty and the independence day of the Russian Federation. It was a chance for Russian Canadians to celebrate the rich culture and history of their great land.

The day had a particular significance for me as a member representing Cooksville. That is because there's a little bit of Romanov history right in the middle of my riding in Cooksville.

Grand Duchess Olga was the youngest child of Emperor Alexander III of Russia. Olga was only 11 years old when her father, the emperor, died, and her brother Nicholas II became the emperor.

When the horrific murder of the Romanovs took place in the summer of 1918, Duchess Olga was already married with two children. Since there was a bounty on the heads of any surviving Romanovs, Olga, as the sister of the emperor, was understandably at risk and went into exile, first in Denmark; and when Europe became too dangerous, she came to Canada.

Duchess Olga arrived with her family in Montreal in the summer of 1948. They first settled in Campbellville, Ontario, where she and her husband farmed, and later settled on Camilla Street in Cooksville, where she lived until her death on November 24, 1960.

Although the duchess died, the Romanov connection continues to live on in Mississauga.

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: This past Saturday, we hosted our 13th annual Kids' Fishing Day at Heber Down Conservation Area. I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all the groups and volunteers who worked so hard to make this day special for the kids. Everyone looks forward to this day, and we had a record crowd to take part again this year. As a matter of fact, Speaker, by 10 o'clock the hundreds of rods and reels that we have out on loan were all loaned out.

Everything was free, and the many activities included conservation, wetland and trapping displays, lure-making, face painting, fly-tying and fish identification.

Numerous groups and organizations gave their time and effort to this special day and I'd like to thank them, including Ducks Unlimited; Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority; the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Zone E; Kids, Cops and Canadian Tire; Muskies Canada; Ministry of Natural Resources, Aurora District; Ontario Sporting Dog Association; the Ontario Deer Hound Association; Durham Regional Police; Pickering Rod and Gun Club; Lindsay Trappers Council; Valu-mart Lindsay; Gagnon Sports; Black Angus Fine Meats and Game; Boys and Girls Club of Durham; Simcoe Hall Settlement House; South Central Ontario Fish and Wildlife Association; WT Hawkins;

Calvary Baptist Church; Optimist Club of Oshawa; Kingsview United Church; Orono Fish and Hunt Club; Blair and John Wilson and the Westmount Kiwanis Club for all their help.

Once again, a big thank you goes out to Walter Oster and the Toronto Sportsmen's Show, who contributed greatly to the success of Kids' Fishing Day across Ontario, as well as Doug and Roli.

And special thanks goes out to Josh, Garrett, Simon, Max and Jacob, who made over a thousand snow cones and popped five gallons of popcorn, on top of the 1,600 hot dogs and hamburgers that were given out.

There were hundreds of rainbow trout caught by the young anglers, and Mr. Speaker, the smiles said it all.

Thanks again to everyone who worked tirelessly to make this day a huge success for the children of our community.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I rise today to recognize those celebrating Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario this May. Ontario is home to approximately 200,000 Jewish Canadians, who together have formed a vibrant and distinguished community that continues to make significant contributions to both the growth and prosperity of our province.

As the MPP for Vaughan, I am proud to say that my own community has a very active and involved Jewish-Canadian contingent. Just last week, I held a town hall at the Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Jewish Community Campus, and I certainly appreciated the insight of those in attendance that evening.

Ontario's Jewish community has had to overcome tremendous challenges, but the tenacity and resolve that they continue to show is truly remarkable. Occasions like Jewish Heritage Month provide all of us with the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the important role that Jewish Canadians have played and continue to play in Ontario.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend my sincere thanks and greetings to all of those celebrating Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario this May.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today, on Community Living Day, to share the concerns and comments of my constituents in Dufferin-Caledon regarding the government's changes to Special Services at Home and the Passport program. Individuals with special needs, and their families, are experiencing many challenges when transitioning from one program to the next.

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You should listen, Minister. This is important.

Many families in Dufferin-Caledon and throughout Ontario have children with special needs who require

ongoing support to be able to live and participate in our community after leaving school. However, funding changes that came into effect last year have meant that those children are now falling between the cracks because the transition between the two programs is not seamless.

Community Living Ontario reports that there are over 4,000 adults on the waiting list for the Passport program. This means children today who are now reaching their 18th birthday and receive Special Services at Home will be cut off from funding and placed on a waiting list for the Passport program.

Worse still are those young adults with special needs who remain in school until the age of 21. They are not eligible for Passport until they complete school, but their Special Services at Home funding is cut off on their 18th birthday.

Children with developmental disabilities wake up with the same special needs on their 18th birthday. What changes is that the services they received when they were 17 years old will no longer exist. Instead, they will be forced to take a number and wait.

When will this government step up and remove the red tape it has imposed on families who rely on these vital support services? When will this government acknowledge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning the US Steel and Steelworkers lockout. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

JOHN TURNER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. John M. Turner, former member of this Legislature from Peterborough from 1971 to 1975; 1977 to 1987—and 1981 to 1985—with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent to pay tribute to John Turner. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member for Beaches-East York.

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Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed an honour for me to pay tribute to John Melville Turner. Every day, when I come to my office, outside of my office there are pictures of the Speakers. One of those Speakers is John Turner. You can look at that picture and see a man of some considerable distinction and look at that picture and see how proudly he wears his war medals—his service

medals—on his chest and how the picture, I believe, captured who he was and the role that he played in this Legislature as Speaker.

John Melville Turner lived a life defined by service to his community, to his province and to his country. Like many of us here today, his path to Queen's Park came by way of municipal politics, after a successful career in the private sector. But that is only one small part of his story. John Turner was a businessman turned politician, that much is true, but he was also a distinguished member of Canada's greatest generation. We are all here wearing poppies today in remembrance of him.

He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942 as a 20-year-old and would serve as a pilot officer for the remainder of World War II. He was part of a special group of people who understood that their sacrifices were the foundation of a stronger future and who willingly rose to the challenge. This type of tenacity and commitment seems to paint a true portrait of the type of man John Turner was. As I said, that true portrait is hanging right outside room 153 of this Legislature.

After winning a narrow victory in 1971, John Turner's career at Queen's Park may have been a short one because of the election that ensued; he lost the election of 1975 by a very small margin. But as fate would have it, in 1977 John Turner was back at the Legislature and he erased, I think for all time, the heartbreaking memory of his small loss with a landslide victory. In the 1981 election, he cemented his place at Queen's Park, almost tripling the margin of his 1977 campaign.

From 1981 to 1985, he served the assembly as Speaker. It was clear that John Turner was not only a respected member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, but of the House itself. Even as the sun set on that government, the Davis government, and that party faced tough times in the elections that followed—remember, in the late-1980s, it could not have been easy being called John Turner. People often, I would think, confused him with the other John Turner in Ottawa, who was, of course, a Liberal. Even though that was the case, the people of Peterborough knew who their John Turner was, and they sent him back to Queen's Park in 1985 with nearly a 5,000 vote margin.

As members, we are acutely aware of the role that our loved ones play in our success as MPPs. To the Turner family—and we have a great many people here today. His wife, June, and his sons Timothy, James and Ian are all present; plus there's a huge, long list of Turners who are here to pay respect to a very great man. To that family, we thank you for sharing John with us.

It is difficult, sometimes, in life for the politicians to spend so much time here, but it is even more difficult for the members of the family who have to wave goodbye on Sunday night and not see their loved one again until Thursday night or Friday morning. You sacrificed along with him for all those many years while he did service to the people of this province. Because of your sacrifice, because of his sacrifice, both Peterborough and Ontario are better places to be. We are thankful for the life and

the dedication of John Turner. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It is truly an honour for me to rise this afternoon to pay tribute to John Turner, a former member from Peterborough and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in the 32nd Parliament.

It's a pleasure for me, and an honour, because John Turner and I were good friends. I remember this past January—in fact, January 26 of this year—I arrived at the Rotary Club of Peterborough, where John and his brother Dr. Art Turner had been members for so many years. I knew instinctively that something was different on that occasion, because normally John and his brother Art would be sitting at the front tables. On 10 occasions, John was always most gracious to thank me at my rotary address, so it was very, very different to be at Rotary on that day and not to see a friend in front of me.

I'd also like to recognize John's family, who are here today for today's tribute to a kind and decent man who served his community and, indeed, his entire country. I want to recognize June and his children, grandchildren and many other family members who are here today for this tribute.

John was a member of Canada's greatest generation. Born and raised in Peterborough, he was a decorated veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force, flying over 30 missions over Europe during the Second World War in a Halifax bomber. He was among a group of very dedicated veterans that, of course, led the restoration of the Halifax bomber that now sits at Canadian Forces Base Trenton as part of the Royal Canadian Air Force museum.

On many occasions, I had the opportunity to enjoy the hospitality of both June and John at 371 Park Street North, a very distinguished home, home of great warmth and a very friendly atmosphere. Of course, their home was beside the home of another Canadian icon, Dr. Tom Symons, the founding president of Trent University. It was remarkable that two homes would be side by side for two individuals who have made such a remarkable contribution to our way of life in the province of Ontario.

John was an alderman in Peterborough from 1969 to 1971. He was first elected to the 29th Parliament. He was then elected to the 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, served as the MPP for Peterborough from 1971 to 1975 and again from 1977 to 1987, and was Speaker from 1981 to 1985. You, Mr. Speaker, of course, often refer to decisions that were made by Speaker Turner.

Two members of this House served with Mr. Turner: the honourable member from York Centre, Mr. Kwinter, and the honourable member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley.

In 2003, he became a member of the advisory committee for the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, a role for which the breadth of his experience and the integrity of his character made him uniquely qualified amongst Ontarians. His commitment to community transcended political affiliation; indeed, he worked to improve the well-being of everyone. He became concerned—often he

and I chatted about this—by the poisonous partisanship that has entered today's politics, which can prevent good things, and he always sought ways to assist everyone to do things in a community.

John Turner was a man who both fought for and served democracy. I know I am the beneficiary of that, because I am standing here today. I got the chance to serve because of John M. Turner. I recall, after I got the privilege to represent the riding of Peterborough in 2003, John called me for an invitation to his home to have a chat with me, to provide some very good advice as I assumed my responsibilities.

On that particular day, June—the wonderful, warm June Turner—was in the kitchen preparing a snack for John and I, and he called me into his study. He gave me a unique gift: four crystal glasses that are emblazoned with the coat of arms of the province of Ontario. What was so unique about those glasses was that they were a gift from Premier William Grenville Davis when John became Speaker in 1981—one of the gifts from his caucus. John gave me that gift and I was overwhelmed. I said, "Why?" John said, "Don't ask any questions, Jeff. I just want you to have these, and I know they'll be in safekeeping for many years to come." So it's a personal gift that I'll always relish.

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It's a privilege to be standing here in tribute to an MPP for Peterborough, for a man who served so ably. He's deeply missed in this community. We always talk about things that John did in the fields of health care, education and business development. You know, not a day goes by when people remind us in Peterborough about the contribution that he made to our community, that everlasting contribution to our community.

So in that vein, shortly I'll be requesting my colleague the Minister of Transportation—I think one of the greatest projects that John was involved with was the four-laning of Highway 115/35 from the 401 in Peterborough. I'll be asking the Minister of Transportation, on that section of Highway 115 that comes from the boundary from the county of Peterborough into the city of Peterborough, to rename it the Honourable John M. Turner Way, and that signs be adorned with a poppy symbol. That will be a reminder for the generations to come that a man from the greatest generation did so much for Peterborough.

In closing, I want to say to my friend John Turner, farewell, my friend. Until we meet again. Thank you so much.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm very pleased to rise today in order to pay tribute to a personal friend and former MPP and Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, John Turner, who passed away this January at the remarkable age of 90.

I'm particularly pleased that so many members of John's family could come here today. They're up in the Speaker's gallery, which is very appropriate. We welcome them to the Legislature. We had a wonderful lunch just before we came down.

My family would often meet up with John and June Turner, as John's provincial riding overlapped the federal riding of my dad, Bill Scott, who was the long-time member of Parliament for what was then Victoria-Haliburton. I'm sure he would have enjoyed the lunch that we had before, because my dad just loved people and loved the Turners. I'm sure he's looking from up above with John and thinking, "That's very nice of them to do that," and enjoying the company.

Over the years, John, and his wife, June, and my parents, Bill and Betty Scott, became good friends, with the families often joining each other at the many events that we have throughout our riding, which of course included attending the famous Kilmount Fair many times, I'm sure. I have very warm memories of that time, as does my mom, Betty, who is watching on TV today from Fenelon Court. She knew that the tribute was coming and was thrilled that she could be able to see it on TV.

We've heard that John was a devoted husband of June and a devoted father to David, James, Robert, Timothy, Ian and Heather. I know not everybody could come today but I think we're up at over 30. Some of the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren join us today also.

I think John is primarily remembered at Queen's Park for his years of service to the Legislature. There was far more, certainly, to that legacy, as has been said. In World War II he served in the Royal Canadian Air Force as a bomber pilot, completing 34 missions over Europe. He was highly respected in his profession as a mechanical contractor and president of W.R. Turner Ltd., a firm founded by his grandfather.

John was committed to his community, serving in a number of capacities. He was active in many, many organizations that have been mentioned—the RCAF, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Peterborough YMCA, the Rotary Club, the Masonic Lodge and St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, of which he was a staunch member.

In 1971, the PC Party was looking for a candidate to run against the famous NDP member Walter Pitman, a ranking member of the party and a former leadership candidate against Stephen Lewis. So when Sandy Fleming came to visit John and June and asked if he would run, he did, and we all know that he was successful in 1971.

In 1974, Premier Davis did appoint John as parliamentary assistant to the provincial secretary for justice. He had a short hiatus in provincial politics from 1975 to 1977, but John was re-elected again in 1977, 1981 and 1985.

One Saturday in 1981, Premier Davis called and asked John if he'd be willing to serve as Speaker of the Legislature. In those days, the Speaker was determined by an understanding between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. Bill Davis recalls that John seemingly sounded surprised—when I talked to Mr. Davis this weekend—at the offer and took a day before accepting, and I think that speaks to John's humility in life.

Because of the tight time constraints, there wasn't an opportunity for him to be measured for the customary tailor-made robes before he assumed his duties. On the day he took his seat in the Speaker's chair, he was quoted in the media as saying, "Everything I have on is borrowed, except for my trousers."

John served as Speaker from 1981 until 1985, a role which he excelled at, not just because of the booming voice that carried throughout the Legislature, but because he seemed to generally fit the chair. He combined the skills of a dignified statesman with the talents of a no-nonsense hockey referee. He was determined to maintain the decorum and civility which he had always personally practised. He was a warm, down-to-earth man who treated everyone with fairness and respect.

I know when I asked Deb Deller, the current Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, she fondly recalls that as a new committee Clerk, she was shocked one day to see that the Speaker had personally walked to her office and was standing in her doorway, looking for information on a bill that was before her committee. He could easily have sent a staff member or simply called, but he made a personal effort himself. Deb said that's who John was. He was everyone's equal and made every employee feel that they and the jobs they were doing were important.

John and June, I know, regarded the Bill Davis years as a marvellous time in their lives. Both John and June genuinely liked people, and it showed. They both threw themselves into their roles, developing warm relationships with members, spouses, staff, pages and visiting dignitaries, often hosting lunches, dinners and barbecues. I know Janet and Gloria joined us for lunch earlier because they have such fond memories of the Turner family, also.

John and June had the privilege of meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on two different occasions. They also met the Queen Mother, as well as Pope John Paul II.

During John's time as Speaker, June told me the story that when they went over to England, they were invited by Sir George Thomas, the Speaker of the British House of Commons, to visit him for dinner at Westminster. They so enjoyed each other's company that Sir George gave them a personal tour not only of the building but of course of the antiques that were involved in the building. The dinner that was supposed to end at 8:30 ended at about 11:30, and I think everyone was very happy at the time they spent together.

When John stepped down as Speaker in 1985, all the party leaders paid tribute to him, and I just wanted to quote a few, because I think it sums up who John was.

Premier Frank Miller said, "In carrying out the duties through some of the most ... difficult debates ever witnessed in this chamber, the member for Peterborough evidenced a courteous and patient nature that often differed from the tone set by the debates themselves."

Opposition leader David Peterson praised the outgoing Speaker, saying that John was a gentleman who

"distinguished this province as its official host, along with his wonderful wife, June."

Bob Rae, the leader of the NDP, said:

"We too very much appreciated the way he served as Speaker and presiding officer of this House...."

"We congratulate him and Mrs. Turner on the wonderful job they did serving as hosts and, in a sense, as guardian angels of this place...."

It's the kind of unanimity that is seldom witnessed in the Ontario Legislature.

Premier Davis told me that he liked and respected John and he had such respect for him that John was the type of person that we should have more of at Queen's Park representing our communities.

John didn't seek re-election in 1987 but continued his keen involvement in Peterborough. I know from the many times I had to sit down with John and June after he finished his political career that they were always on top of what was happening in Peterborough and in the province and were razor-sharp on your memories, and I think corrected a lot of your judgments that you were recalling.

John's legacy will certainly live for a long, long time. Today is a continuation, I think, of the celebration of a life well led.

John exemplified the best of being a devoted family man, a tireless volunteer in his community and a dedicated public servant. He always lived his life based on a solid foundation of uncompromising decency, integrity and generosity. We are all better off in this House for having known him, and it is a better place for him having served here.

I would like to thank June and the Turner family for allowing me to be part of this tribute. Thank you.

1340

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all members for their kind and heartfelt comments. I thank the family for being here. On behalf of all of us, we thank you for allowing us to celebrate the triumph of a special person. Thank you very much.

Just to show you that I probably wouldn't be able to fill his shoes, I forgot something, and that is to let the family know that we will have copies of Hansard and a DVD of the tribute sent directly to the family. Thank you all.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PAIEMENTS RAPIDES

Mr. Del Duca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry /
Projet de loi 69, Loi concernant les paiements effectués

aux termes de contrats et de contrats de sous-traitance dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to be in the House today to introduce my very first private member's bill, the Prompt Payment Act, 2013. The act sets out various rules and requirements in relation to payments made under construction contracts.

Among other things, part II of the act entitles contractors and subcontractors to receive progress payments and to suspend work or terminate a contract if such payments are not made. It also provides that payments can only be withheld if the payor notifies the payee that a payment application is disapproved or amended within 10 days after it is submitted. Limits are imposed on the amount that can be withheld.

Part III of the act requires owners to provide contractors with certain financial information before entering into a contract. It also entitles subcontractors to receive certain financial information.

I would like to very briefly thank my colleague the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for some of the outstanding work she has done on this particular issue. I would also like to acknowledge that the member from Brant—the Speaker himself—in a previous Parliament did introduce a bill on the same subject—Bill 211, I believe—prior to the 2011 election.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has asked for unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet for two days during the constituency week of May 20, 2013, for the purpose of conducting public hearings as part of its standing order 111(a) study relating to traffic congestion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent to put forward a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 27 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 27 be waived. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE CONFERENCE TRAVEL

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 2013 annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Regina, Saskatchewan, from August 25 to 27, 2013; and

That the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to attend the 2013 National Conference of State Legislatures in Atlanta, Georgia, from August 11 to 15, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Standing Committee—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

All those agreed that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Community Living Day at the Legislature. I'd first like to welcome our guests who have joined us today from Community Living Ontario and from various Community Living groups across the province. You represent a wonderful legacy of change, and we are pleased—indeed, honoured—to have you with us here today.

Some 60 years ago, a group of families came together with a common goal: to ensure the right for their sons and daughters to go to school. This would become a monumental first step in a decades-long journey that would fundamentally change the way we provide services to people with a developmental disability.

Over the years, the Community Living movement became about far more than just the right to an education; it became about the right to be included in all aspects of community living. I applaud Community Living Ontario for their tireless efforts to help change public attitudes about people with a developmental disability. You have inspired countless individuals throughout this province to become involved in their communities, you have brought hope to families whose biggest wish is for their child to have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, and you have inspired governments to join you on this journey towards a truly inclusive society.

Together, you have helped open our eyes to new ways of thinking. Since then, we have worked hard together to help people live more independent lives in their communities. We closed the last three remaining provincially run institutions; we introduced modern legislation that better protects and supports adults with developmental disabilities; and, together, we gave adults and families greater choice about how they participate in the community by creating the Passport direct funding program.

Now we are in the midst of a large-scale plan to modernize Ontario's developmental services system to make it fairer for everyone, consistent across the province and financially sustainable in the long term. To support this plan, in the 2013 budget we proposed a new annual investment of almost \$43 million in developmental services that will provide about 1,000 adults and their families with new or additional support.

1350

I am proud of what we've achieved together so far, but I know there is much more work to be done. For example, we are continuing to look for ways to encourage more inclusive workplaces that help break down barriers for people with disabilities who can and want to work. That's why in the budget we also announced our intention to work with corporate leaders to establish a Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People With Disabilities to champion hiring people with those disabilities.

Community Living envisions a society where people who have an intellectual disability belong and feel respected, where everyone is worthy of dignity and respect. It's a vision that we, as a government, share. From education and employment to recreation and daily living, we strive to encourage the full inclusion of everyone, and together, with the support of our communities, we can make it a reality.

As we take our next steps, we are thankful to have partners like Community Living Ontario and like the families and individuals here with us today, showing us, helping us to lead the way. Today, we celebrate how far we've come and we celebrate our hope for the future. We celebrate the relationships and the partnerships that have been built throughout this journey together, and we celebrate all those whose lives have been made better, thanks to those inspirational first families, our Community Living organizations and everyone who has joined their efforts to make such important differences.

I invite all honourable members to please join me in welcoming Community Living Ontario and their members here today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about Community Living today. Earlier, I and a number of MPPs enjoyed the Community Living reception, and many of us also met with representatives of the organization, many who are in the House this afternoon.

Since 1953, Community Living Ontario has advocated for people with intellectual disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of community life so that all people are able to live in a state of dignity, share in all elements of living in our communities and have the opportunity to be better enabled to fully participate.

Community Living Ontario has over 12,000 members across the province and is represented through 117 local associations in our own home communities, offering a number of things: support to children and/or adults to live, learn and work within the community; help communities themselves welcome and include people; and advocate for change so that people have a better time of it in their home community.

The work is not without its challenges. I think of the 12,000 with an intellectual disability on the waiting list for residential support. I think of 4,000 adults waiting for daily living support through the Passport program; 7,000 families of children are on the wait-list for Special Services at Home, the SSAH program. And we see more and more parents in their 60s, 70s and 80s supporting a son or daughter with an intellectual disability, with little help.

We've all seen the stories, regrettably, in the media: A desperate parent who has run out of options, dropping a child off at the doorstep of a social service agency that was unable to accommodate them—lack of funding, lack of space. I really cannot imagine anything more heart-wrenching than a decision like that.

Speaker, we hear of the \$42 million in the recent budget to support the needs of families and young people. We've asked for details; there are none. Last week, I asked twice for some more information on that particular program and how the money would be allocated that goes with it.

I note the proposal to encourage employment for social service recipients through allowing them to keep more of the money they make. At the same time, I do question why the disabled were shut out of a proposed asset limit increase that we did see for clients of the Ontario Works program.

As far as employment, those on ODSP—and I received a brochure today, and as it indicates, people on ODSP are ready, willing and able. Hiring those with disabilities is easier than one would think. They want a job, like everybody else. They're punctual. They want that independence that goes with it.

We welcome the representatives here in our Legislature. We know that, through the budget, we're looking

at something like \$10 billion budgeted for social services. Obviously, the opportunity is there. There's a lot that can be done with \$10 billion through effective support of the elderly, the disabled, the truly disadvantaged. So we do have an opportunity. We've got a chance to refocus, to reset priorities.

In my view, it's time to wake up Ontario's social services system through approaches, through programs, perhaps new programs, laden with fresh, cost-effective ideas to better help us to deal with these very complex problems—problems that can be dealt with in a flexible way and by offering choice.

Stay tuned. Our health critic, the member from Whitby—Oshawa, will be calling for a more clear focus with respect to developmental services later this week.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I just want to say to all of those from Community Living here, a great thank you for all that you do and all that you are, from Andrea Horwath and all of the New Democratic Party. Thank you so much.

What you've done, as you know better than anyone, is without a great deal of help from anybody, and particularly this government. In fact, this government, since 2010, has envisaged cuts to many of the services that you have, I wouldn't say "enjoyed" because they've never really been there very much, but certainly they haven't got any better since this government has taken power—and in some cases, worse.

In fact, 30% of those agencies that have been put in place to assist you are now working with deficits constantly. Every day in the House, I read out petitions around that very fact.

As you've just heard, 23,000 children and adults are on waiting lists—you say, and you're right—and 12,000 are waiting for a home. The average wait time is from one year to four years.

For example, for something like IBI, the only sustained treatment paid for by the province, by the time children in that region begin receiving IBI, they are on average 7.6 years old, past the critical window between the ages of two and seven when scientists have shown this type of intervention has the best chance of success.

1400

We know, for example, that the Ombudsman is right now conducting a study and will have that report soon. We don't have to wait for that report, do we? We know what he's going to say. We know that he's going to say the services are woefully inadequate. I want to put a face to the inadequacy of those services, and it's not the Telford face, that poor family. It's a face in my own community—and this is a plea to my friend the Minister of Community and Social Services on behalf of this family. I helped, in a very small way, to build the house this family lives in.

Her name is Lorena Sinato, and she is a single parent who lives in a Habitat for Humanity house, one of the very, very lucky ones. Very few people have that opportunity; she's one of them. She lives in this house with her

son, Bryan, and a whole group in our community got together in 2012 to help build the house she lives in.

Her son, Bryan, was born at 27 weeks. He has cerebral palsy, he's autistic and he's blind. And she cares for him, but she also works. She works in a bank. She has to work, because if she doesn't work, she will lose the house we built for her—that she helped to build for herself. If she doesn't have a job, she can't get a mortgage, such as it is, a very small one, and she can't keep the house. And yet she's facing that very possibility because of Bryan's needs.

Because of Bryan's needs, she's managed to find some respite care—we're talking about after school and when she desperately needs it—just to the end of August. The CCAC has thrown up their hands. They can't help her. No wonder they can't help her. She's one of thousands waiting for that help.

We've heard about the \$42 million. My friends, you know better than anyone that that represents about 14% of the people on the waiting list. What about everyone else? I've even talked about aging parents with children with developmental disabilities and others. There's no response at all for them right now. So a personal plea for this family, because time is running out. I can't imagine a tragedy like hers, again like the Telfords and other families across the province face. In this case, she'll lose a house that was a charitable work as well.

So what are we saying to my friend across the aisle? We're saying this is a start, but it's a very small start. Please step up—please, please step up for Lorena. Please, please step up for Bryan. Please, please step up for all the families that are here today, pleading with you to step up. They've done what they can. They've done more than they can, and they continue to work and do a yeoman's and yeowoman's task here. But they need your help, and that help has to be more than a promise. It has to become a reality.

Please, on behalf of Community Living, I make that plea on behalf of all the families here.

Again, thank you for what you've done with very little help in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank members for their statements.

RENÉ FONTAINE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. René Fontaine, a former member of this Legislative Assembly from Cochrane North from 1985 to 1990 and a former provincial cabinet minister, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is looking for unanimous consent to pay tribute to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I may go a little bit longer than five. I just want to let you know.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It throws me off when I'm in the middle of a sentence.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent for the tribute, please? Agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to pay tribute to René Fontaine. He was, as the Kapuskasing Times newspaper headline declared following his death on March 17, 2012, a true northern icon.

On behalf of the entire Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I want to extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Yolande, and the other members of his family who are here today in the Speaker's gallery. Thank you for coming today.

René Fontaine served here at Queen's Park as the MPP for Cochrane North for two terms between 1985 and 1990. As a new member, he stepped right into the cabinet as Minister of Mines and Northern Affairs. His service in this place wasn't long when measured in years, but like everything else René did in his remarkable life, he used his time effectively. When one studies his record, there is no question that he managed to accomplish what he came here to do: to make a real difference in the lives of those he was elected to serve.

I was a young mayor of Brockville at the time René served in the cabinet of Premier Peterson. Although I didn't get to know him really well, I do distinctly recall meeting him on several occasions when I was involved with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. René Fontaine was one of those people you really never forget meeting. He knew how to leave a lasting impression. He was a larger-than-life character. If you went to central casting and asked them to come up with a man who personified the spirit of northern Ontario, they'd come back to you with René Fontaine.

Hearst Mayor Roger Sigouin chuckled last week when recalling René's personality: "He was so colourful. Even today, when I see people who worked with him, they say what a character he was. What a great guy he was."

René Fontaine was 51 when he became an MPP and cabinet minister, but he had already accomplished so many things in his life. He was a successful businessman, operating the Fontaine family's lumber company since the 1950s. He was no stranger to politics, having served as a municipal councillor in the town of Hearst from 1963 to 1966, and then on to being mayor from 1967 until 1980.

During his quarter-century of municipal service, he left a very impressive legacy as a builder. It's evident when you look at Hearst today, including the airport that bears his name.

One of the most notable achievements came in 1977, when Hearst was proclaimed officially bilingual, a step no other Ontario municipality had taken. In addition to standing up for Franco-Ontarians, he was a visionary in understanding the need to include First Nations in the dialogue about developing the north. That's considered

essential today, but 30 years ago—that was when he was promoting that approach.

When he decided to enter provincial politics by running as a Liberal nominee in 1985, I have to say, he didn't exactly pick what was considered a safe seat. In fact, Cochrane North hadn't been represented by a Liberal MPP in 37 years. So what did René Fontaine do? He went out and beat the incumbent PC by nearly 2,000 votes, and he increased that margin to nearly 4,000 votes in the 1987 general election. Of course, history also shows that René went to the people of Cochrane North one other time between 1985 and the 1987 general election. In June 1986, he did the honourable thing and stepped down from cabinet until questions about his personal holdings had been dealt with. But that wasn't enough for him. True to form, he wanted his constituents to be the judges of his actions, so he resigned his seat, and he was promptly swept to victory in a subsequent by-election. He later returned to cabinet and served until 1990, when he decided not to seek re-election.

I could stand here, and I know other members could stand here, for hours and talk about his contribution to the north during his time as MPP and cabinet minister. The list includes founding the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., which we all know continues today. But I think it's more appropriate to talk not about the things he did but why he did them.

I've reviewed Hansard and looked at some of René's days here, and his passion for the north is so evident in his words. He was such a fierce defender of northern Ontario, a champion of its economy, and a proud promoter of the hard-working people and beautiful natural spaces.

1410

There's one particular passage that I found in Hansard that reveals to me so much of his character and why he was so committed to public service. It was from a night session on February 6, 1986, and I think he really spoke from the heart when debating youth unemployment. Here's his quote: "As I have said lots of times, when I go to meet my creator he is going to ask me, 'What did you do for the youth in the north between 1980 or 1990?' That is why I am here. I will at least be able to answer that I went into politics to try to do something; that is one of the reasons.

"I did not come here to see my name with the Honourable René in front; I did not come here to have a car driven by a chauffeur. I came here to try to give the rest of my life, if I can, and with my energy to try to give a ray of light to those young people who are suffering."

As we honour René Fontaine today, those of us with the privilege of serving here can pay him no greater tribute than by resolving to live up to those powerful and deeply personal words. Thank you.

M. Gilles Bisson: Parler de René Fontaine, c'est une histoire d'elle-même. René était assez un caractère, une personne qui était—lui, c'était un individu qui n'était rien autre que René Fontaine.

C'est difficile de parler de René sans dire une couple d'histoires du temps de René. Ce que je demande à la

famille, s'il vous plaît, ne fâchez-vous pas contre moi; j'ai une couple de belles histoires qui décrivent votre père pour qu'il était, et je vais faire ça dans les deux langues.

Comme on le sait, M. Fontaine ramenait le bilinguisme à Hearst que les anglophones pouvaient se trouver incapables de comprendre de quoi nous autres parlions à Hearst dans le temps. Moi, j'ai toujours pensé que c'était un peu drôle, mais c'est une autre histoire.

I was just saying that to talk about René Fontaine is quite something because René was nothing but René. He was a type of character who didn't emulate other people, didn't pretend to be anything else other than he was. He was just a real, genuine, genuine human being who saw something and tried to do something about it, and tried to do the right thing all of the time.

My good friend from the Conservative caucus talked about his experience when he found himself in a bit of a situation, having forgotten to disclose that he owned some shares in a mining company. It was raised by the Tories, and Mr. Fontaine, as was pointed out, didn't just resign his cabinet spot. He decided to go out and seek the election of the people of Cochrane North in order to make sure that he cleared the air and people understood where he was coming from. That's something I think maybe we should think about every now and then, because I don't think anybody else ever did that, and I think it says something about the man.

Listen, I will say this about René: He spoke a language that is seldom spoken in Canada. We called it Fontaine, because when René spoke with passion, which was most of the time, he was speaking half in French, half in English, and always very animated. The good people of Hearst, a few people that you know—we used to refer to René and his colourful discussion as speaking Fontaine. I want to give an example of that that happened here in the Legislature during that particular time.

A Conservative member whom I won't name, because it wouldn't be fair—he's not in the Legislature today—got up in the House and asked a very pointed question to Mr. Fontaine, who was on the government benches, and was very pointed in regard to the question that he was putting forward, at which point René took exception. So René got up, as René always does, and says, "Monsieur le Président, I got to tell you, j'ai toute une affaire, puis oh boy, ce gars-là"—and he was all over the place, as only René can do.

Everybody was sort of listening and wondering where he was going with it, when all of a sudden, the supplementary had to be put. The Conservative member gets up, looks to the House across the way, looks at René, and says, "What do I ask?" He says, "He is unintelligible," at which point a member of the NDP caucus, Gilles Pouliot, gets up, rises to a point of order, and says, "Monsieur le Président, sur un point d'ordre. That vile little man in the front row of the Conservative caucus—he dares to stand in this Legislature and say that Monsieur Fontaine is not intelligent. First of all, as a francophone, and number two, as a member of the assembly and as a

fellow northerner, I want to say that that is not the case. In fact, Monsieur Fontaine has a very high IQ. The only problem is, half is in French and half is in English."

The reason I tell that story is that some people might be offended, but René understood that, in the cut and thrust of this place, sometimes you give it and sometimes you take it, and you've got to take both sides of it. That's something that René really understood. He understood that at times, yes, you had to fight hard for what you believed in; even if you had to fight with your friends, and often with the foe, you always had to remember that at the end of the day, we're all human beings. If we can't laugh about ourselves, what's the point? René understood that to quite an extent.

J'ai eu l'occasion dans la ville de Hearst de travailler avec René sur beaucoup de dossiers. Puis l'affaire que j'ai toujours appréciée de René, c'est que même si on sait tout que René—il était partisan libéral. Ce gars-là avait une couche rouge; il restait avec sa couche rouge toute sa vie, puis ça, il est fier.

N'importe ce qui se passait, quand ça venait à la ville de Hearst, quand ça venait au nord de l'Ontario, puis il y avait un dossier que tu étais incapable d'avancer, pour lui, il n'y avait aucune différence avec qui il travaillait. Si tu voulais travailler avec lui sur quelque chose qu'il pensait était important, si tu étais conservateur, néo-démocrate ou libéral, ça ne faisait aucune différence.

But wait until you got into a campaign. That was a whole different story, because René was the ultimate campaigner and, in fact, put a stranglehold on the town of Hearst to quite an extent. I think it took me two elections before I was able to win after he had been gone for three or four terms. People had—just out of the work that René had done and the respect that people had for him in Hearst—still been voting Liberal even though he wasn't there. Thank God, I've been lucky over the last couple of elections in the town of Hearst, but a lot of that was René, and I think that says something: that people respected what he did even after he was gone.

We talk about the northern heritage fund that was created under René Fontaine. Another thing that he had created was what they call the development corporations. The development corporations were regional committees within northern Ontario that sat as northerners together—mayors, people from the business community, people from labour and others—to sit down and say, "How do we deal with this issue that's affecting us now?" For example, if there was a forestry issue, if there was a mining issue or if there was a transportation issue, these regional councils sat down and gave advice to the minister about what can be done.

I can tell you, that was something that was very appreciated and something, maybe, we should think about again, because certainly people in northern Ontario want to be part of the solution, as always. René understood that, but he was quite proud of that. That's one of the things that he told me, when I first got elected, that he was proudest of, because some of the best ideas came

from the work of those councils that he was able to act on as minister.

Like I say, I've had the opportunity with René to see him at many community events within the riding and to see him a whole bunch of times during the campaign. I'm going to share another little story about René, because it goes without saying that he was a good campaigner.

I believe it was the election where Mike Doody had run as the Liberal candidate; I might be wrong, but I think it was that one. I was up canvassing on the day that the Liberal opponent was opening his committee room, so I was up canvassing in the town of Hearst, and my campaign manager, who was Chris Mockler, said, "We'll meet up after you're finished campaigning at night," because you normally canvass until it gets dark, "and we'll meet back at the room" we were staying at, in whatever hotel we were at.

We get in. He said, "How'd it go?" I said, "It's starting to feel okay. There's a big, long shadow in this town, and it's called René Fontaine, because I'm picking it up on the door. But I seem to feel as if things are starting to go." I think that was the first election I actually won in Hearst.

He said, "I went to Mike Doody's committee room opening." I said, "How'd that go?" He said, "Oh, it wasn't bad. They had a few people there. They ordered some Chinese food." I said, "What did you do?" He said, "Oh, I went in. I had Chinese food. I had to eat; what the heck? I went in, sat down, had some Chinese food, and sat with some wonderful people. I recruited a couple of volunteers and I brought them to the committee room afterwards." I said, "Chris, you don't do that. You don't go in the other guy's committee room. That's not a good thing."

The next day, I end up at CINN FM, where we're all doing our radio ads for the campaign, and René is there with the candidate. René stops me and he says: « Ah, Bisson, tu n'as pas une chance. Tu as dit—on a toute une équipe ici, Mike Doody, et ça va tout bien aller, tu vas voir. On va gagner Hearst puis on va gagner tout le comté, puis ça va être rouge, tu vas voir. » J'ai dit: « Bien, je te souhaite la bonne chance, René. » J'ai dit: « Je vais faire ce que je peux. »

He turns around and he says, "As a matter of fact, it goes so good, last night we had our committee room opening down there on George Street and we had people coming in off the street. People who moved into town for the first time: The first thing they do is they come to our committee room and say they're going to be Liberal." I say, "Oh, yeah?" and all of a sudden my campaign manager walks through the door. He goes, "He's the guy!" I said, "May I introduce you to my campaign manager?"

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But again, I say that story because some people might have gotten mad. I was certainly mad at my campaign manager for having done that, because that's not the way I operate things. I don't like that. It doesn't feel good. But René took it for what it was, and he thought it was

funnier than I did. Actually, I was telling René after, "Listen, I talked to my campaign manager and told him that wasn't good." "Hey, inquiète-toi pas," he said, "we had lots of Chinese food. It was all good. Don't worry about it." That's the type of guy he was.

I want to end on a couple of things I already touched on. One is his role with First Nations. René worked with the Constance Lake First Nation and other First Nations long before it was in vogue—quite frankly, when it was quite the other way. He understood, probably more so than anybody else because of his background—he wasn't just a politician; he wasn't just the mayor; he also ran a forest company in Hearst and understood that if you're going to develop northern Ontario, you've got to bring First Nations along with you and they've got to be able to benefit. Long after he left business and long after he left politics as an active politician in this place, he continued working with First Nations, with Constance Lake and others, in order to try to make things better and to try to find economic opportunity for the First Nation of Constance Lake. I can tell you, I've heard lots of stories from many people whom he affected in a very positive way there.

The other thing is—and it has to be said, for the town of Hearst: Never have we had such a champion as René Fontaine in the town of Hearst. That guy, I've got to tell you, was involved in almost everything and got a whole bunch of things done because he was a very tenacious individual. He knew how to reach across the aisle and work with people when he had to, he knew how to fight you when he had to, but best of all, he knew who he was fighting for, and that was for his community and the people of northern Ontario.

To the family, écoute, c'est difficile de perdre un père. Moi je le sais; j'ai passé à travers avec ma mère puis mon père. Ce n'est pas facile. Bien, vous avez des mémoires qui vont toujours rester avec vous autres et qui vont vous rappeler qui votre père était. Je peux vous dire, vous avez beaucoup à avoir fier que René était votre père. Moi, je suis fier que c'était mon ami. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Further tributes? The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank Steve and Gilles for doing such a great job of trying to shape this very, very unique and wonderful individual.

Before I go any further, I'd like to recognize Ninon and Sylvie Fontaine, who are in the gallery, along with Sylvie's husband, Mario; David Fontaine, René's son; and Lucie Boutin, David's wife. Thank you for coming today.

When you think of René Fontaine, you think of words like "icon, pioneer, builder, innovator, advocate, champion, visionary," and descriptive words like "colourful, emotional, excitable, passionate, powerful"—at least, that's the way northerners described him when they heard of his death on March 17 of last year at the age of 78.

It is a privilege to expand on these words and talk a little bit about our friend René Fontaine on behalf of the Liberal Party. René was passionate about Hearst and all of northern Ontario. He was very successful in the world of business, helping to establish a lucrative lumber business in Hearst, which grew into a large enterprise employing many people in Hearst and the surrounding area.

But his real love was people, so he started his political career in 1963, serving as a town councillor in Hearst. In 1967, he ran successfully for the mayor of Hearst and remained in that position until 1980. In 1977, René was bold enough to declare Hearst a bilingual community, a step no other Ontario municipality had taken. Why? Because he passionately believed in bilingualism. He passionately believed that the mix of cultures bring about the best in any community. But that was only one of the many firsts we can attribute to this dynamic individual.

He ran in the provincial election in 1985, defeating the sitting Conservative—a very good member by the name of René Piché—in the riding of Cochrane North. He was the only Liberal MPP elected from northern Ontario and so was appointed to the Peterson cabinet as the Minister of Mines and Northern Affairs.

René was a man of incredible integrity, as Gilles said earlier. Found to be in a conflict-of-interest position, René first of all admitted his mistake and resigned not only his cabinet seat but also his seat, by which a by-election was set in motion, saying he had to be exonerated by the people who sent him here. He was so respected for this position that the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party chose not to run candidates against him, and he easily defeated the spread of minor candidates to return as MPP for Cochrane North.

You know, whenever you heard René speak to young people—after you deciphered what he was saying—he told young people about the importance of being honourable. To him, “honourable” meant something. It was a very, very special word, term and title, and he made sure, both inside and outside of politics, that people understood that if you’re honourable, your credibility always remains intact.

After the Peterson landslide of 1987, René was appointed as the first Minister of Northern Development, a post he kept until August 1990, when a provincial election was called. René chose not to run in that election.

René was way ahead of his time. He implored governments of all stripes to engage our First Nations communities. He said that realization of the north’s potential was impossible without First Nations’ engagement. And until the day he died, he believed that and preached that.

To say that René was colourful would be an understatement. He had a very distinctive voice, which was always filled with much emotion. Not always easy to understand, René would simply say, “I don’t know. I don’t understand why they don’t understand me. I speak two languages: broken English and broken French.”

René was never afraid to poke fun at himself, but he was always very respectful of the people he interacted with, be they friends or foes.

René understood the alienation northerners felt, and so he convinced Premier Peterson to create the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. in June 1988—we celebrate 25 years of René Fontaine this year—as a way to pay northerners back for the enormous wealth extracted from northern Ontario through mining and forestry. Today, this fund stands at \$100 million a year and, since 2003, our investments of \$834 million have leveraged over \$3 billion, creating 22,182 jobs. I say that not to brag. I say that because it was the idea that René Fontaine had for northern Ontario; another idea, another first that made a difference in the lives of northerners.

René loved people, he loved northerners, he loved his area of Ontario and he loved his family, and so, on behalf of everyone here, I am very, very proud that his wife, Yolande, their children, Sylvie, Gilles, Pierre, David and Ninon, and their extended family, will have a permanent testimonial to René’s very, very important contribution to the people of Ontario.

I last saw René several weeks before his death, when he was in Sudbury for treatment. We had a great chat. He did most of the talking, and I did all of the listening. He was very, very happy with what he’d been able to achieve and champion. He definitely was at peace with himself.

I was reminded by my father, on his deathbed, that death only ends a life, not a relationship, and I am convinced that northerners will always have a relationship with René.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank, again, all members for their very heartfelt and warm comments about René. I would also like to thank the family for this wonderful gift of René Fontaine. I would also like to let you know that we will have a copy of Hansard and a DVD of today’s tribute presented to the family.

Again, I personally would like to thank all the members for the kind words that they say about each other in this place. Thank you very much.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a very substantial petition that I wish to present to the Legislature this afternoon. It has been signed or supported by 2,237 people in my area. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an evaluation of Highway 6 south was initiated in the early 1980s and the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project was presented to the MTO in 1994;

"Very little progress has been made since then despite numerous meetings with a succession of MTO ministers by Puslinch councillors and local residents;

"Traffic has increased dramatically since 2006 when 12% of truck traffic used this portion of the highway, whereas today it is closer to 30%;

"Frustrated drivers speed over Puslinch/Flamborough rural roads to avoid Morriston congestion;

"Morriston residents' health is affected by the chronic congestion;

"Safety is a major issue: 22 lives have been lost since 1994 and many motorists and their families have suffered serious injury. Since 2004 four people have been killed in head-on collisions which may have been prevented had the bypass been in place;

"Morriston's chronic congestion negatively affects the economy of southwestern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To prioritize the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project by placing it on the southern highways program, the transportation ministry's five-year investment plan in highway construction for southern Ontario."

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition and have affixed my signature as well.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

"Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

"Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

"Whereas Line 9's reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

"Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario act in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects."

I agree with this. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to page Simon.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful handguns in cars is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers; and

"Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess handguns; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licence of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police and their efforts to make our community safer; and

"Whereas current federal laws dealing with handguns in cars need to be strengthened and are not a deterrent; and

"Whereas the flow of smuggled guns into Ontario goes on and continues without interruption;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass MPP Mike Colle's PMB entitled the Unlawfully Possessed Handguns in Vehicles Act, 2013, into law so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful handguns and drive-by shootings in our communities."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 30(c), the time allotted for routine proceedings has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We were at the completion of the comments from the member from York Centre's two-minuter. Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's my pleasure and honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Davenport and speak to the budget bill, Bill 65. I welcome friends in the gallery today and also welcome Grandma Grace, watching at home. Grandma Grace, I'm going to be up here for about 15 or 20 minutes, so if you'd like to make yourself comfortable with a cup of tea and some snacks, we'll be here for a while.

Speaker, residents in Davenport and across Ontario have sent a clear message that they want MPPs to work hard for them in this Parliament. They want MPPs to work hard to make life more affordable in Ontario, to improve health care and public services, and to create jobs. They want MPPs to work hard to make this a fairer, more prosperous province. They want accountability from this government, and they feel betrayed that this government has wasted billions of public dollars on eHealth, Ornge and gas plant scandals. New Democrats hear these concerns and we continue to listen to Ontarians about how to make this budget begin to meet their needs and how to make this government more accountable.

Bill 65 is entitled the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act. Most of us probably read 1984 in high school. Even my friends in the PC Party probably did read that document back then. We read about George Orwell's Ministry of Truth, but it never fails to surprise me to see the lengths that this government goes to create misinformation. It's my belief that the people of Ontario will not be fooled by fancy titles like the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act or by words like "the new government of Ontario." Just introducing a bill with a good name does not change the material fortunes of people in this province. The people of Ontario know that two plus two does not add up to five just because the Liberals say it does, although we are learning to get used to Liberal math, where they can turn \$40 million into \$600 million, for example.

Before I talk about the content of this bill, I'd like to talk a little bit more about prosperity and fairness in Ontario. Since I was elected in 2011, I've had the honour to work hard with our NDP team to make Ontario better for my constituents in Davenport and for all Ontarians. So when the Liberal government shut down Queen's Park last fall, my NDP colleagues went back into our communities. We went to talk and to listen to the people we represent. We all heard from constituents across the province that they were disappointed with this Liberal government. Across the province, people were shocked by the Liberal government's lack of accountability and were disappointed with the policies that this government has implemented. Let's just say that "prosperous" and "fair" were not, and are not, the words I hear from constituents to describe this government.

Knocking on doors, I continue to hear that life is getting harder for people, it's getting more expensive for families in Davenport and that many people are struggling to pay the bills. I hear from young people who are looking for work, hoping that somehow they can get a break, but too often they can't find a good, stable job. I hear from young people who have invested years of their lives and thousands of dollars on their education. They assumed that when they graduated, they would be able to find a job afterwards. Yet they are stuck struggling with debt and underemployment; they're stuck in precarious situations or stuck in their parents' basements.

When people do find work, youth and workers in general are not getting the kind of protection they need.

So after somebody pays some of the highest tuition fees in North America—or in Canada, I should say—they are left without access to good jobs. They're left in jobs that are less than secure and safe. Just last week, my office helped a constituent who was working in a fast-food joint. She had been told, in her first week's work, that it was training and therefore she wasn't eligible to be paid, which is against the law in Ontario. But because there is such competition for even low-paid jobs in this province, it's difficult for workers like this woman to feel safe and secure about speaking up about this. Luckily, she was able to get assistance from my office and we were actually able to secure her wages that she was owed.

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Mr. Michael Prue: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches—East York on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Prue: I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if there is a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the table staff to ascertain whether or not a quorum is present.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I return to the member for Davenport and recognize him.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. It's always great to have an audience here in the assembly to talk about the needs of people in Ontario. I was just talking about a worker who hadn't been paid their fair dues in Ontario, and that's partially because this government is not doing what it should be doing to secure the rights of workers in Ontario. In 2008, for example, under public pressure, this government agreed to invest \$10 million a year for more employment standards officers. But five years later, this is just another broken Liberal promise. Youth and all Ontario workers have the right to decent jobs, to live and work without constant insecurity and without fear of arbitrary violations of their rights at work, but this government is doing nothing to protect their rights.

I hear from low-income constituents who are vulnerable, and they feel completely abandoned by this government and completely betrayed. These are people who had high hopes for government to deliver on their promise to reduce poverty and who have only heard talk and seen little action. For years, advocates and people living in poverty have identified the tangle of rules that prevent people on social assistance from getting ahead. Yet instead of changing these rules, this government has allowed people to struggle for the last 10 years while they delay and commission more studies. Meanwhile, we continue to see more cuts to critical emergency programs.

Most recently, this government cruelly cut the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit program. This is a program that helps low-income families keep their housing, it helps low-income women escape violence, and it helps vulnerable Ontarians deal with emergencies like bedbug infestations. Speaker, no matter what kind of math you believe in, this kind of cut makes no sense. It is absolutely cruel, and it just doesn't add up. This is going to create more people depending on shelters, more people depending on crisis services, more people in hospitals. Yet this is the short-sighted kind of public policy that we can count on from this government.

Many of my constituents have aging parents or are seniors themselves, and health care is at top of mind for them. Constituents are telling me that they need more reliable home care and a health care system that's there for them and their families when they need it. I hear from constituents who are tired of the austerity measures that this government takes to "balance the budget." They're tired of a government that has been asking struggling families to do with less and pay more while this government squanders millions of dollars on privatization boondoggles in our health care and power systems. Constituents are sick of this government putting themselves first, while people in Davenport are left behind.

My constituents don't appreciate a government that calls itself new or calls itself social-justice-oriented just months after that same government imposed contracts on teachers and unilaterally stripped workers of their rights to bargain with their employers. Speaker, we want to see real social justice in Ontario. People want to see a balanced, accountable approach to the budget and a more respectful approach to politics and government.

My experience is that people in Davenport want to see corporations pay their fair share in Ontario, because people are dismayed to see that while most people in Ontario are trying to pay the bills, trying to pay for child care, trying to pay for summer camp, the Premier is now considering new taxes, new revenue tools, on these same people by refusing to take concrete action to close corporate tax loopholes that allow big corporations to write off expensive restaurant expenses, luxury box seats at hockey games, and five-star hotels. Speaker, this simply does not feel fair.

People in Ontario know it's not fair to keep giving handouts to the wealthiest corporations while asking hard-working families that are struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads to pay more and get less. That is why the NDP is advocating for high-quality, accessible public services and a progressive tax system to make life more fair and affordable.

After listening to the people of Ontario, our NDP team began this legislative session by introducing a short series of proposals to help create jobs for young people, ensure that families have access to home care, protect the earnings of people on social assistance and make life more affordable for families by lowering auto insurance rates by 15% over the next year. We proposed these very

reasonable and modest affordable investments in our province, and we proposed a fair way to pay for them.

The Liberal government has addressed some of these key issues in this budget, but this budget does not include the cost-saving proposals we made, like capping hospital CEO salaries or closing corporate tax loopholes. This is desperately needed revenue that could deliver more than \$1.3 billion each year.

There's also a lack of timelines or firm commitments made in this budget, and so it's unclear whether this government, despite more promises, will actually be able to deliver for the people of Ontario. The one thing we do hear over and over again in Davenport and across Ontario is that people have a hard time trusting this government.

Even if we could trust this government, there's a question about whether this budget is the right approach for this economy. In a recent Toronto Star article, Thomas Walkom called this a restraint budget. He says, "Wynne, like her predecessor Dalton McGuinty, has drunk the metaphorical Kool-Aid of the right, insisting that the only way out of the economic slump is to balance Ontario's budget by 2018."

He says that while "the Liberals have agreed to new spending demanded by the NDP ... they have also pledged to let overall spending grow on average by less than 1% a year.

"Translation: The new NDP spending increases are to be offset by unspecified cuts somewhere else."

Walkom quotes the finance minister: "'Eliminating the deficit is the single most important step we can take to grow the economy and create jobs,' Sousa told the Legislature Thursday. His words echoed those of his predecessor Dwight Duncan. And both are dead wrong."

Walkom says, "The single most important step the province can take to boost job growth is to create more jobs. Cutting government spending doesn't do that. It does the opposite."

I agree with Walkom, and many Ontarians do as well. The austerity measures which the Liberals have fully embraced are not the key to economic growth and recovery. It's clear to the NDP that we need a balanced approach and that we will not successfully cut our way to prosperity.

Even though this government has adopted some of our proposals in this budget, I remain very concerned about the overall direction this government is headed. As Walkom has pointed out, the Liberals are not willing to invest in jobs and public services in this province. They're looking for ways to cut. That's why, when some media folks say this is an NDP budget, it's hard not to laugh. This is a budget that was created by the Liberal government, and it promises more of the same economic ideology that's shared by Liberals and Conservatives alike.

In this budget, we see that real GDP growth in Ontario is going to be stuck at 1.5%, which is one of the lowest growth rates Ontario has experienced since the Second World War. Liberals and Conservatives always promise that tax cuts will spur growth in Ontario. But these cuts

have meant that revenue in Ontario has fallen from \$18 billion to \$12 million in recent years. Even as the government plans to continue to cut corporate taxes in the future, we now have a large deficit and crumbling infrastructure, and our economy is stagnant.

Six hundred thousand people remain unemployed in Ontario, and job growth will rest at around 1.2%. Private sector growth will sit at a measly 1.6%. Our economic growth continues to lag behind even countries in Europe that faced catastrophic conditions in past years and well behind the United States. Despite cuts in spending and increasing tax breaks for corporations, the austerity embraced by the Progressive Conservatives, and now the Liberals, is not working. It's flawed, and it's clear Ontarians are paying the price.

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The province needs to invest money to run and maintain our social services, to expand transit and road infrastructure, and to pay down the deficit. So why is this government so unwilling to generate this revenue? Just this morning in question period, the Minister of Transportation was boasting that the Ontario government spends the least per capita of any province in Canada, and then when he was asked why people in northern Ontario can't drive on their roads, he had nothing more to say. The government's approach isn't fiscally responsible, and it doesn't work for people in Ontario. This province has a revenue problem, and while this government may be content to try and solve the deficit on the backs of Ontarians by cutting their services and increasing taxes for regular people, New Democrats know this isn't the way to go. It's not the way to build a prosperous and fair Ontario.

Another good example of the flawed Liberal logic is the debate over transit. The Liberal government likes to pretend that somehow it's our party that is creating political gridlock in Ontario, that somehow it's the NDP that's caused the transit funding crisis in Toronto and the GTHA, but we know that history speaks for itself. It's only the Ontario NDP that has shown consistent support for public investment and for transit operating and capital funding. It is the Eves, the Harris, the McGuinty and now the Wynne government's commitments to cutting taxes that have left Ontarians with billions of dollars less each year in revenue, and they have left the overwhelming majority of Ontarians with decaying public infrastructure and no money to pay for repairs or new public investment in transit or other critical infrastructure.

In recent years, when she was transportation minister, Kathleen Wynne cut one third of the funding from the original Transit City plan, and the Ontario Liberal government cut the bus replacement program and continues to pursue a path of transit privatization and starve municipalities of the funds they need to operate and maintain our transit systems. Now, Speaker, Premier Wynne insists that we have to find new revenue for transit.

New Democrats have rightly pointed out that a good portion of the \$1.3 billion that we have asked for could be saved by closing new corporate tax loopholes. This

money could be used to help pay for building of new transit and cycling infrastructure in cities like Toronto over the years to come, and yet the Liberal government cannot part with its continued logic of cutting taxes and keeping corporate taxes as low as possible. This government did not incorporate this suggestion into the budget. But, Speaker, the government is now investigating HOT lanes, and this is a venture that we believe won't encourage more drivers to use transit, and it will raise only \$25 million a year; that's what Metrolinx estimates.

But the NDP knows that we need to pay for public transit and we need to pay for it in ways that are fair to the broader public who have not prospered over the last 20 years. Closing corporate loopholes will not be enough on its own to catch up on 20 years of neglect when it comes to public transit infrastructure, but it would be an important step to raising that revenue, and we remain committed to adopting additional equitable revenue tools that meet the infrastructure needs of this province.

In the time that remains, I'd like to return to what New Democrats are hearing from Ontarians on this budget. I've received a lot of emails from constituents in my riding of Davenport. People are aware that this government has incorporated some of our asks in the budget, and they are happy to see that, but they're also aware that this government continues to cut vital services and ask people to make sacrifices while they squander billions of dollars on ill-conceived private power deals, Ornge and eHealth, and they don't want this to continue.

After years of broken promises, people want to see some accountability and transparency from this government. That is why New Democrats are calling for the creation of a financial accountability officer. This officer would be like the federal parliamentary budget officer. The officer would provide independent information about how the provincial government spends money and ensures that this government is accountable to the people of Ontario. This is just one tool to ensure some accountability from this government. Given the failures of this government to act responsibly on behalf of the people of Ontario, I hope that we will be seeing support from the government and from all parties to push this initiative through.

I'll just take a minute to go back to the transit conversation. One thing that people continue to tell us is that they want dedicated revenue for transit, because they're concerned that when they pay taxes, they don't have any idea what happens to that money, and I understand that. But I think this speaks to a much broader issue, and it's an issue of a wider lack of accountability. We desperately need to invest in transit in Ontario, but we also need to restore the people's confidence in this government to spend their dollars wisely, and that's why I truly hope that this government will consider the proposal we've made for an accountability officer, to make sure that when people go to work and pay their taxes, that that tax money goes into the public institutions that we so badly need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I was listening to the comments from the member from Davenport. I appreciate his addition to the budget documents which we are debating for the next few days, I hope—until we get to decide what this House is going to do with it. I do appreciate the comments from the member.

I have to say, however, that this past—I believe it was Friday or Thursday; I forget now. I've been holding my own meetings in my own community with respect to the contents of the budget. The result that I got from the people that I spoke to that were present was, actually, they said, "When, when, when are you going to move on this particular piece of legislation?" after I explained all the benefits contained in the budget.

I think the member from Davenport has mentioned some of the benefits incorporated into the budget and suggested by the leader of the third party as well, especially auto insurance. The heart of my area is Jane and Finch. I don't have to tell you how much our wonderful area—and I don't say that metaphorically, Speaker; it is a wonderful area, but we are being penalized because our drivers are paying a much higher rate of car insurance. I do hope that this alone really brought a breath of fresh air, if you will, to my community. When they said, "Really, 15%? We are going to get it? When are we going to get it?" we said—

Mr. Michael Prue: Did they ask where you got the idea?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, I mentioned that, and I have to remind my colleague that I also had my own private member's bill on that.

There are a lot of good things—I will be speaking later on. I hope I have a bit more time to expand on that, but for the moment, I just want to commend the member for speaking on the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a privilege and an honour to comment on the member from Davenport, who just delivered a very good, well-detailed speech. He pointed out a number of factors which we often forget in this House.

The government is today talking about their belief in transit. They're talking about how we find—and I use their words—"revenue tools" in order to fund that transit, but one needs only go back a few years to the then transportation minister, none other than our own Premier, Kathleen Wynne. She was the transportation minister under the McGuinty government, when \$4 billion was cut out of the transportation funds. It was not really cut out, it was delayed for a couple of years, but those couple of years' delay have had a huge impact on transportation within the city of Toronto in terms of subway building and LRTs, setting the whole process back. It would have been well on its way, and then the debate would have long been over, had that not happened, and I commend the member for bringing that up.

New Democrats believe in transit, although some days I sit here and I am occasionally mocked from the other side. We fundamentally believe in transit. Transit is an absolutely essential item in every town or city in this province. People need to get to and from work. We need to ease gridlock. We need to make sure it's affordable. We pay the highest single-use transit fees in all of North America, we receive the least subsidy—if you're in the city of Toronto—for any large municipality in all of North America, and we have to start talking about doing something about it.

But really what we need is an accountability officer, which he closed off on, to make sure that the money is being spent wisely, because we can no longer be in a position in this government, in the province, to be spending money or wasting money in any way that is not directly helping people.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say at the onset that I thought the member from Davenport made a very thoughtful speech today, certainly contributing to the ongoing debate we're having this afternoon on Bill 65, the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act.

We have a bit of a relationship in Peterborough with Davenport. GE Hitachi, which is a nuclear division of GE Canada, is headquartered in Peterborough. They have a sister plant, part of that operation, in Davenport. It's an important part of that relationship in Davenport and Peterborough, and in fact in Arnprior. The three manufacturing plants work together, and they're very involved in building the fuel bundles that are used in the Candu system around the world. I just wanted to let the member know that we in Peterborough do have a relationship with Davenport.

Just a couple of things: When I was in my riding of Peterborough—it was actually Saturday—I was down in the beautiful village of Havelock, Ontario. In fact I was chatting with a former very distinguished member of the NDP caucus, the honourable Elmer Buchanan, who lives in Havelock. He was your ag minister from 1990 to 1995, and hailed as one of the very best ag ministers ever. Elmer and I were chatting about a number of things. He just wanted to pass on to his former colleagues here at Queen's Park that something that's very important to the families in Havelock, Ontario, is the Ontario Child Benefit, which provides financial support to one million children and to about 500,000 low- to moderate-income families, and which has helped to lift 40,000 children out of poverty in Ontario. I know the member from Davenport is very interested in that. So if we could get this budget passed, on July 1 we would move the OCB to \$1,210. I know the children in Havelock want that, and the children in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I just want to start off by saying I'd like to thank the member of Davenport for his fine presentation.

He touched on two important issues: Ombudsman oversight and accountability. Speaker, I don't know why this government is afraid of Ombudsman oversight and accountability. I don't know why they won't put it in. It's a no-brainer. In fact, we're trying to keep them out of trouble in the future by installing these types of situations. We need fiscal responsibility, so we need an office of finance to oversee the dealings in this Legislature, which would keep any government out of trouble. I don't know why anybody would not want that.

What our leader has asked for is reasonable, doable and profitable for the province. It's going to stop crazy spending; stop lobbyists from getting into a position where they spend more than is in the budget. For example, eHealth went out to three firms that ended up spending more than what the population got out of it. They spent \$388 million, and they got \$100 million worth of hardware, software etc., and they spent \$288 million on consultants. It's beyond me the waste around here. So why would any government stand in the way of these types of initiatives? This is very important. This should be part of this budget.

I really get aggravated, Speaker, when I hear the Liberal government or the Toronto Star say, "We gave them everything they wanted." No, you didn't. No, they didn't. They've top-ended the front of it by the money they want to give for the health sector; they gave more than they should have. But on all the other ones, there's a lot of grey areas, and it's extremely weak. So don't tell me you gave us everything. The Toronto Star should know better than that. They keep saying it, and I think they're trying to influence somebody. Can you imagine that, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Davenport for his reply.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you to all members who contributed, made comments to my remarks.

Speaker, it's clear to me that the reason why we're in this situation must lie with the government. They've been here for 10 years, they're not a new government, so the fact that people are struggling with high student tuitions in this province is the fault of this government, the fact that we can't regulate our auto insurance industry and it continues to rip people off and charge them the highest auto insurance rates in Canada is because of this government, and the reason why people don't have jobs—and when they don't have jobs, they don't have any protection—is because of this government.

Yet it's now urgent that we make a decision today, according to this government, because 10 years later they're now going to finally take care of kids in this province. That's what the Minister of Rural Affairs was saying a minute ago, that we must pass this budget so that we can implement the Ontario Child Benefit. Speaker, we need to support children and families who are struggling, and this is something we should have done years ago. Instead they're acting as if this is something

we're holding up at this time. This is simply inaccurate, and I don't think the people will fall for this.

I have to say I think we need to aim higher in this province. The truth is that a lot of people in Davenport don't want an election. But it's not because they endorse this government, it's not because they like this government; it's because they can't stand the policy ideas of the people on the other side of here, the PC Party. That's just the truth: 10% of people in my riding support the PCs. But this is not an endorsement of this government; they're saying, "Hold your nose and support these people, because this is as good as it gets."

Speaker, it is all of our jobs to make sure that people across Ontario know that we can do better, we have to do better. I'm going to let other people contribute to this debate now. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to have a few minutes to address this important piece of legislation here, which is our budget. I can appreciate the members on the opposite side making their contribution to the debate on the budget bill as well.

Let me say that prior to the document coming forth, it's quite normal that the Minister of Finance is engaged in consultations throughout Ontario. What are those consultations that take place? He meets with the Ontario people. He meets with corporations, stakeholders, various organizations and individuals at community halls. If my memory serves me well, I think he met with some 600,000 Ontarians through town hall meetings, some stakeholders and various other groups as well. I think the content of the bill represents—

Mr. Peter Shurman: You believe that?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, my friend says I was consulted as well. He's one of those Ontarians who, through their deliberations, yes, incorporates some of those demands, if you will.

I'm pleased that the budget contains a lot of those interesting ideas that the third party has brought forth. I think we share those ideas. It's reflected in the responses that I have gotten from my own constituency, and I represent an area of about 110,000 or 115,000 people.

During one of my last encounters, it was interesting, a comment made by a young lady there, when she said, "Huh. It sounds like this is a working-class budget." "Well," I said, "you said it, and you know what? I have to agree with you," because once we went through with the proposed benefits that the budget contains, I couldn't disagree with her. She said, "When are we going to see this budget going through?" I said, "Well, hopefully—in the legislative agenda itself, we have to go through a process. But it's coming."

This, the bill submitted by the government, has been labelled as fair. We want to create this economic fairness, if you will, a balanced approach. Many names have been given to it. But I believe that it does both, especially at this particular time. We can talk about creating and laying out a credible economic renewal plan. Out of all

the challenges that the Wynne government is facing, we see and we can grasp the opportunity to kick-start economic growth by promoting the creation of a very positive and robust job creation plan, which we have proposed. Unemployment numbers, I have to say, continue to frustrate all of us: all of us as Ontarians, Canadians as well, and especially among our young people.

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We share this vision and we seize these particular opportunities with key economic business and industries and, yes, with other levels of government as well. Co-operation is indeed needed from all other sorts of government: federal, regional and municipal.

Speaker, I believe that our plan is sound. If we succeed, our people succeed. Our province will grow, and jobs will be created—and prosperity. It's all real if we can deliver what we promise for our people. Our people, after all, aren't asking for anything less.

How can we create this renewal, this potential of opportunity, Speaker? I would say, create a business climate that is realistic and competitively smart. It's a fair tax system—and effective regulations, investments in job creation, and entrepreneurship. We have a huge potential to revitalize and move into the 21st century with new technologies and to modernize our own infrastructure, investing in transit, roads, schools, hospitals and helping our municipalities. In 2013 alone, we put \$699 million into the budget with respect to the partnership fund and supporting our regional and municipal governments.

If we look for our people to prosper and to succeed, we have to invest in new skills, in education and in training, to sustain the competition and pressure from outside. Our people must be ready and well equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

We also understand that we are not alone; that the prosperity and success we seek is sought by others as well, often by our own competitive partners in trading and exchanging goods and services in our global economic innovations of goods and services. Ontario must have an eye on the world, Speaker, supporting our businesses to expand in global markets, promoting goods and services beyond our own Ontario borders and beyond the borders of our friend to the south, and seeking out new economic partners and new emerging economies and markets as well.

I have to say that we are blessed with a wonderful country and a very enviable province. As a government, we must always be very much aware that this bright and prosperous future lies in having healthy partners as well. Our many towns, villages, cities, townships, municipalities and regional governments all hope to be vibrant and to build strong communities of their own. As a government, we have to recognize and embrace their wanting to share in the economic benefits, the job creation and the potential for prosperity.

This is part of our vision and economic plan, if you will. But if I have time, Speaker, let me go into some of the details of the other goods that are within the budget.

We said from the beginning, and I think both the Premier and the Minister of Finance have made it quite clear, that eliminating the deficit by 2017-18 is a major priority. Well, I have to say, that we are on track. We are down to something like \$9.8 billion, and I have to say—and I am very pleased to acknowledge this—that we are the only jurisdiction in Canada who reported the lowest deficit forecast for four years in a row.

In support of our families, of our working-class people and the people who are in need of some help, we have the Trillium benefit. We made some changes to the Trillium benefit. Now it is optional—it can be received in a lump sum or it can be received on a monthly basis. I am speaking of the Ontario Sales Tax Credit and the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit. That alone amounts to around \$1,200 of benefits and rebates.

We've talked about auto insurance and reducing it by 15%. I've been dealing with this now since 2008 or 2009, when I first introduced my bill on reducing auto insurance, so it is not surprising to see it in the budget now, but it is a surprise that we have our third party that is very supportive of it, and I'm grateful that it's here and that our people finally can see some major improvements with respect to—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Very supportive of it? They made you put it in there.

Hon. Mario Sergio: And yes, we'll make it work, because it's going to be legislated. For the benefit of my friend, who—I don't know at this stage if he has read the budget yet or not but it will be legislated.

I am commenting on the wonderful comment by my friend the member from Thornhill. I know he is very supportive of the major parts of the bill, because he always says, "No, it's not against the budget that we are talking; it's about the government." I can appreciate and I can understand the difference and the perspective that the member brings.

It would be a good thing—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Listen, you get the comments from Doug Ford.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, absolutely. We all loved him as well. As long as we get support, let it come from all sides. Rob Ford? Yes, I'm sure that he loves the 1% gas tax that he gets every year from the province of Ontario. It is a first. It goes a long way in making sure that it is well used, and therefore, yes, we welcome Rob Ford.

With respect to other parts of the bill itself: \$700 million in investment to help some 46,000 people receive in-home and community care—these are some of the major announcements that are being incorporated within the bill. When we speak about health care and home care, we are talking about the most needy people. We have, again, support of our ideas coming from the third party and giving the five-day guarantee, and we agree. We said, "Look, if they are entitled to receive benefits, if they are going to get it, they might as well get it on time."

One of the major benefits that I think is good for our people who are in need of monthly support is increasing

the Ontario Child Benefit plan. It goes from \$1,210 to \$1,310. I think this is good news. What is also good news, and I think I mentioned it before, is that the jobless amongst our youth—it's frustrating, because it's still up there, 7.7% or 7.8%, but it's affecting mostly our young people. We have, in this budget, set aside some \$295 million over two years establishing a Youth Jobs Strategy to create jobs and mentoring opportunities for some 30,000 of our youth. I think this is great.

We can't wait until we see the budget approved so we can commence to initiate these programs to make sure our young people will avail themselves of these programs, and we hope that this will be done soon.

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Another plank in the budget is not only the young but supporting adult people with developmental disabilities as well—an extra \$42 million.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That's fantastic.

Hon. Mario Sergio: It is absolutely fantastic, \$42 million to help those in need when they need it.

I want to dwell on this for a moment, because my friend brought up Rob Ford, infrastructure jobs and growth, and potentials. Speaker, we are not talking \$3 million or \$35 million. We are talking about an investment in our future, in the future of our province, of our people—some \$35 billion. It's a major, firm commitment for investment in infrastructure, public transit, roads, bridges, hospitals and schools, and I know that our communities, big and small, are looking for help.

In good economic times, everybody is working and money is coming in, and municipalities also enjoy the benefit of that. When times are tough, they suffer as well, as we do—perhaps more. Being smaller municipalities, they don't have the same tax base we do. So it is nice to see that the Premier has thought of our rural areas, helping small municipalities with infrastructure money.

I don't have to say, thinking of our city of Toronto and Mayor Ford—myself coming from municipal government, I know the money that is needed on a regular basis, year after year, to maintain our roads, our bridges, our infrastructure, our sewers and all the other facilities we take for granted sometimes. We just get in our cars or jump on the subway and go from one place to another without considering what it takes to maintain good services, good roads and good infrastructure. But of course, people don't want to know how it's done; they want to see that it's done. I think this is going to go a long way to helping not only metro Toronto but all the municipalities throughout Ontario.

But what is important is still keeping the major planks, and the minister and Premier Wynne as well say we will have to do it in a very balanced way. We must be fair in what we're doing. We still have to see that education and health care are a major component, and we have to look after the needs of our people.

Today, if we see some changes to the health care system—how we are providing it—it's because for years, if I may say, some parts of the delivery of services come from an old, antiquated system, and it's not fair. We see

that throughout Ontario—I can see it in my own ministry now, for example—the way we deliver some of the services is not being done in the best interests of all the people throughout Ontario.

I don't have to tell you that we have seniors, in many cases, living in the north, the east, the south and the west, and they are all the same. They all have certain needs, certain requirements. They need care. I don't have to tell you, Speaker, that from the age of 65 to 100 they are living longer and healthier now. Their requirements or health care needs vary. They are all different. What we have to look for—this is part of delivering the health care I was talking about. We have to be ready to meet this challenge and create opportunities out of this challenge. So when our people, not only seniors, but young ones—with respect to education, we're taking care of the young ones at a very early age.

So when our people need the care they need, it has to be there. Now we are starting to see, thanks to the hard work that the Minister of Health is doing on a regular basis, trying change how we deliver those services with the same money, if you will—and there is an increase in the budget as well. We have to deliver those services in a reasonable period of time to the people who need it when they need it, and make sure those services, those care levels, are delivered.

I am proud to say, Speaker, finally—and I'm going to throw this in at the last minute—that I was delighted to see that in 2010 we created the Retirement Homes Act, because it wasn't there before. As you know, retirement homes are all private; there was no control. So our seniors especially were paying their monthly rents, if you will, but they had absolutely no protection. They were at the mercy of the deliverer, the caregiver there, but there was no control. Today, I'm happy to say—and it's part of the government's delivery of providing better service to our people in Ontario. Long-term homes already had it, but not seniors living in retirement homes. So it doesn't matter if you live in a public or a private place, people are people. They deserve to be treated with fairness, with justice, with care and with tenderness, because especially at that age, they deserve it. And we should make sure that we never forget that our seniors, many of them, are in situations where they no longer have family members, so we have to give them peace of mind that they live in facilities where they are safe and service delivery is done in such a way—am I done, Speaker? Oh, my time is done. Speaker, I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the minister of seniors' services, and he said many times during the course of his speech that this was a working-class budget, as if somehow this party, this Liberal government, has suddenly discovered roots on the left that they had long forgotten existed. I would like to remind them that it wasn't very many months ago when they were cheering on right-wing budgets put forward by the previous finance minister as if that was the gospel truth. I welcome

whatever change of heart they have had, but New Democrats remain skeptical. It's why New Democrats, even though we appreciate some of the those items found in the budget—largely because we wrote them. It's because we are skeptical about the change of heart which seemingly has so effortlessly been undertaken by the members opposite.

That's why we're asking for Ombudsman oversight in our hospitals: because we know that in our hospitals there has been a lot of wastage of money around the entire fiasco of eHealth. We are worried because in our hospitals we have seen the dispersion of cancer-causing drugs that were watered down in saline solutions. We are worried about our hospitals and our health care because we have seen how money was wasted and wasted again and again at Ornge. So we believe that before we start listening to promises and the change of heart, we have to see that change of attitude.

My friend also talked about the Ontario Child Benefit. I would remind the government opposite that you're a year behind in that and that, if you were not a year behind, you probably would be close to your poverty targets. But you're not going to meet the 25 in 5 which you had set because you have not kept up to date. That's why we think we need a budget officer as well. When we have those, then we can start believing the things you're starting to talk about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's always a privilege to follow the measured and not automatically vitriolic remarks of the honourable colleague from Beaches—East York. I appreciate what you say. You deliver your remarks with sense and with thought, and I think the government will do well to take heart.

I think this budget has so much that has been crafted and configured to help Ontarians where they live, whether we're speaking about health care, which of course from my own perspective as a physician-parliamentarian is very dear, as well as education.

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I'd like to highlight just a few aspects perhaps to drill down from the many, many numbers—and the 400-page-plus tome that came our way—of the budget. We have now, for example, in the province of Ontario 400,000 patients who interact with physicians on a daily basis. We now have 4,000 more physicians practising in the province of Ontario than when we took office in October of 2003. These are major achievements, and you don't have to go too far out of Ontario—for example, our neighbours to the south—to see that that's almost a miraculous aspect. Because you have, for example, a population in the United States with no health care coverage at all that exceeds the population of Canada.

We continue to screen for 30-plus diseases right at the newborn aspect: PKU—phenylketonuria—and cystic fibrosis. That doesn't even exist across Canada.

Closer to home, in the great riding of Etobicoke North, we recently funded Etobicoke General Hospital for an

expansion—a massive, four-storey new cardiac wing, etc.—to the tune of about \$200 million. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to take this opportunity to commend CEO Matt Anderson for his leadership and his stewardship of the on-the-ground services.

All of this is to create a more just, a more fair society. “Just society” you'll remember, Speaker, as the phrase of Trudeau 1. “Fair society” is the phrase of Premier Kathleen Wynne.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is my first opportunity to speak on the budget thus far on behalf of the great riding of Essex.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you to my honourable colleague across the way.

I speak without vitriol and without prejudice and with all due respect, as the member would know. I would hope he would sense that despite all of the wonderful platitudes encompassed in this budget document, and the wonderful initiatives that have been pointed out, and concepts, ideas, priorities and otherwise, the people of this province do not, frankly, believe you; they do not trust you. Can we blame them at this point?

It is one of the most important measures. Despite all of the initiatives, despite all of the money that you associate the initiatives, we need to infuse hope, belief and trust back into this government. I say with great fervor that I hope this government takes that responsibility seriously and I hope they take our offerings—in terms of the financial accountability office and Ombudsman oversight for health care—seriously.

I've heard the Premier say, “When are these demands, when are these ideas from the NDP going to stop? When will you stop proposing good ideas? We have a limit on the Liberal side of good ideas; we can't handle too many more good ideas.” I would submit that the official opposition hasn't given you any, so we'll take up their space. They haven't read any of the document. There's a couple that they on the table there. We'll give you a couple of ours; you can add those into the basket and put together a document that people can finally have trust in.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My vitriol? I left it for the PCs.

Please, government officials, take it and deliver to the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Similarly to the member from Essex, it's my first opportunity to speak about the budget. Just a comment on the remarks made from the minister responsible for seniors, I think one area of the budget that I really, really like a lot is the focus on poverty and especially trying to help those who are in poor living standards or poor circumstances or income. My riding is very strange, in the sense that there's one half that is quite lower-income; then, as you get closer to the lake, the incomes are a bit higher. When I'm at my

constituency office, I get a lot of people who come in from various parts of my riding—mostly from the northern part, where it is a poor income area—and they're looking for help.

This budget—I mean, the minister spoke to it, but there are some parts in particular that are very, very helpful. I mean, we're increasing funding for children in poverty and we're helping people with disabilities. I have people that come into my office with disabilities—a lot of them—people that come in and ask me, “How am I going to feed my children?” or “My children can't seem to move on in life.” I think we're addressing those issues, and I'm glad we are, because in the end all politics is local. In my riding, when you're on the ground level, you get to see the local aspect.

Unfortunately I only have 13 seconds left. Hopefully, I'll get a chance to speak more on this, but this is a budget that helps those in need, and that's what I'm very impressed by. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I'll return to the minister responsible for seniors for his response.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank my colleagues the members from Scarborough Southwest, Essex, Etobicoke North and Beaches—East York. I really appreciate everyone's comments but especially the one from Essex, where he says, “You know, please, please, please, yes, we gave you some good ideas but now, how are you going to keep those promises?”—

Interjection: You're on a roll.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, we are on a roll. The thing is this: We are saying in here, what comes first, the chicken or the egg? You know? They say, “It's good, but now we want to see that you're going to do it.” Well, okay, let's move on and let's see how we are going to do it.

I have to say that we kept a lot of those wonderful promises. I mean, we have \$295 million to create jobs for youth. We have money in there to create a lot of jobs. Let me say something about jobs. Last week, I went to York University. I don't have to tell you the amount of work and the number of jobs that we have created only with one particular project. We are putting into this budget \$35 million—\$35 billion, rather—to create more jobs.

So I have to agree with the members that have made a contribution to my presentation: Let's get on with this budget. There are a lot of good things for our people. The member from Essex is quite right: “Are you going to do it?”

Well, we cannot do it unless the budget is approved. So I hope that in the next few days we can move it towards that area, because it's good on the social side and on the education side, creating jobs for young people and delivering more home care for our seniors. So I do hope indeed that we can speak as much as we want, but let's move on. Let's get the budget and let's move on with the good things that are in the budget. I thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't believe we have a quorum here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will ask the table staff to ascertain whether or not the House has a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Pursuant to standing over 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise. I recognize the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try to be helpful this afternoon. I know that people are watching this riveting debate today and we want to make sure it continues. So at this time, please stand by and say, Mr. Speaker, we would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate. I'm pleased to recognize the member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

1540

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Speaker. Prepare for a riveting debate.

I think we've been hearing from the official opposition about who actually owns this budget going forward, and I believe that we have to remember that this is actually the people's budget. It isn't owned by any one party, and it certainly—there are parties who can opt out of the budget; we've seen that clearly, by the PCs. But the people of Ontario expect us to get results for the people of Ontario.

It's true that the NDP's asks have been reflected in the document, but we also have to remember that these asks—these policy and these program initiatives—came from the people of Ontario through consultation, through listening. I know some people are getting tired of the consultation process, but it's an important part of the democratic process: listening to people, serving the people of this province. That is why we are here. Certainly they expect politicians to work harder, not less.

Moving forward, we need to be absolutely sure that the government will deliver to Ontarians. You can't blame us for being distrustful and you can't blame the people of this province for being distrustful. And we are concerned.

Unlike the Conservatives, we have approached this budget process openly and have done so transparently. Indeed, we are being criticized for being too open and too transparent. But that's okay because, at the end of the

day, we are trying to get a stronger budget for the people of this province.

We believe that Ontarians deserve some clarity, some guarantees of service. That's why we have actually pursued the idea of accountability tools like the financial accountability office and like the much-needed Ombudsman oversight in health care. I believe that these tools should not actually be regarded as asks, because the Liberal government did not include a five-day guarantee for home care and they did not include a 15% reduction in auto insurance over the course of 12 months. So we have asked for accountability measures to be included. We take the responsibility of ensuring that this budget is stronger for Ontarians, and we take this responsibility seriously, unlike the party to our right. But we have to be clear: We aren't asking for more; we are asking for it to be done right.

The Premier and the finance minister have actually called these proposals interesting. We think that they're more than interesting. We think that accountability is actually needed in this House. It's actually needed to rebuild the trust with the electorate, the citizens whom we serve. We want to bring accountability to this budget and ensure that public dollars won't be wasted, as they have been on eHealth, on Ornge, on gas plants.

Last week, our leader put forward two proposals to bring accountability to government. The proposed financial accountability office would bring oversight and accountability to the government's books. I cannot understand why someone would not support this idea. It makes so much sense. It even makes sense from the Common Sense Revolution kind of sense that we're still dealing with in the province.

Ontarians deserve clear, transparent and independent information about their government. We need to provide forward-looking cost assessment so that we can stop scandals before they start. I know it's quite a concept, but it is needed.

Ombudsman oversight of health care would rebuild Ontarians' trust that has been broken through scandals and failure to provide clear guarantees in the health care system. In the last year, we've seen a scandal at Ornge and a scandal with compromised chemotherapy drugs. The Ombudsman could have potentially investigated when initial concerns were raised if his office had had oversight of Ornge and hospitals. We, in Ontario, are the only province that does not provide Ombudsman oversight to hospitals and long-term-care facilities, and it is time to right this wrong.

New Democrats have worked hard to put forward fair, reasonable, affordable ways to deliver results for people, and these measures need to be implemented to make sure that this happens. That's what people expect from us. They expect us to work to make a budget work for them.

In fact, those who live on the margins or are caught in the cycle of poverty—which admittedly is not easily interrupted—have great expectations of us, as they should. It isn't difficult to see why some groups who advocate for those without voices, or for the ability to speak

up and out, are dissatisfied with the progress made on poverty reduction, for instance. The long-promised strategy, which was supposed to be inclusive of housing, education, health care, public transit—this strategy was supposed to begin with early learning and care and go all the way to senior care. Indeed, you can measure a government's success by how they best deal with the most vulnerable in society. I believe that we have much work to do before us.

I was called to task by a resident in Kitchener-Waterloo over the weekend. He wasn't against our auto insurance plan; in fact, he was supportive of it. He understands our affordability agenda for everyday Ontarians, but he did raise the need for more affordable and accessible transit.

Now in this budget we saw the fact that a fair and effective approach to funding transit was not there. The proposal to charge people to use HOV lanes will only create—as our leader has coined the phrase—“Lexus lanes” for wealthy people and does not encourage carpooling. This proposal to toll HOV lanes has no numbers or timelines, and I believe the member from Trinity-Spadina has rightly pointed out that this plan has some very big holes in it.

Thus the need to take the time to process the budget, to dig down and peel back the layers of what actually is contained within this budget—because the day that these announcements were made, the Minister of Finance announced that these would be everywhere, just as if you can wave a magic wand and make it happen. We need to see the strategy and we need to see the plan, and that is part of our job as an opposition party.

The government commits to converting selected HOV lanes in GTHA to HOV/HOT lanes, as done in Florida, Texas and California. The government's going to consult on the implementation of HOT lanes. Well, I can tell you already that the response on the HOT lanes has not been very positive and certainly there are more questions than answers on this.

There are also planned highway projects—again, very short on details; an investment in GO Transit to increase capacity. Public transit—this is where the investment is needed. We need to get people using public transit; we need to get them out of their cars. We need to make public transit work for the people so that it actually will translate into some real results for Ontarians.

So we have more questions than answers on this budget. Certainly when you look at the issue of transit through the eyes of those who live in poverty, one must wonder how HOT lanes are going to improve life for those in this province.

On social assistance, poverty and housing, the budget moved forward on the NDP's proposal to allow social assistance recipients to keep more of their employment earnings. Certainly this is a step in the right direction, as our finance critic has said, but this is the beginning of this discussion on how we can encourage and support those who are on social assistance. The 1% increase in social assistance recipients plus the \$14 a month top-up

for single OW recipients is hardly something that will alleviate the crushing experience of poverty which is certainly a carry-over from the Harris years and certainly continues on through the last almost 10 years of Liberal rule in this province.

Certainly, some mention of the Special Diet Allowance which, again, our finance critic has correctly referenced as an early intervention and a prevention measure that is needed to ensure that those who actually live on the margins, who live in extreme poverty, can access nutrition—because that's a preventive tool to use to ensure that those people stay healthy.

The continued delay in the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit—as announced in the last budget, will rise to a certain level this month and \$1,300 in 2014, and that's a year behind schedule. Certainly, this is being held over the entire budget process in a fairly, quite honestly, threatening manner. But you know, what's really important on this portfolio is that we do need to continue to listen to those lived, experienced voices on the poverty agenda.

Finally, the government will establish a panel of business workers and youth to report back in six months and advise how to adjust the minimum wage. You know, we had in our platform from 2011 an \$11 minimum wage rate—a good place to start that conversation, but certainly I think that we have to be cognizant of the fact that there are people in this province who are working full-time and they cannot get above the poverty level. They cannot rise up out of poverty when they are working full-time and do not have access to affordable housing.

1550

There's nothing on affordable housing. As the critic for infrastructure, this is a key component of building a strong economy. People who cannot access affordable housing, who do not have an address to put on a resumé, have a very hard time finding a job. Our commitment is to move forward to try to address these key issues because they are not just human rights issues; these are economic issues. They affect the entire economy of the province.

It's worth noting that the wait-list for social housing in Ontario is up 24% since 2003. I think it's also worth noting that there are jobs to be created in the housing portfolio, and there are certainly supportive housing projects that need to happen as well. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing budget was cut for the third consecutive year, by another \$20 million. It is hard to understand how proposing cuts on key-economic-driver portfolios will actually stimulate the economy; it really is.

The NDP has called for a fair and adequate minimum wage—and I want to say, just for reference, that MPP Cheri DiNovo, the member for Parkdale-High Park, worked hard with community activists to force the Liberal government to significantly increase the minimum wage between 2000 and 2010. We continue to push the envelope. We continue to push these priorities to make

sure they are reflected in the budget documents of this government. We see that as a key piece of our work that we have to do. But certainly progress has been stalled in this regard under the Liberal government. There has been no increase to the minimum wage in three years.

We are looking at a state of affairs in the province of Ontario where the Liberals never took action on the 2011 promise to set up the minimum wage advisory committee. They recommitted to this. If this budget passes, if we can actually push through some of the reforms that are needed to ensure that the economy returns to a stronger state, and if we can be sure that those who live on the margins of society do not continue to be forgotten year after year, then this advisory committee potentially should talk about what a living wage is. What is that number? It's not a magic number. I think we have a pretty good idea of what people need to earn in order to make sure they can provide for their children and afford housing. I think it's very clear that a working wage is a signal that this government is looking to increase the prosperity of all Ontarians, not just some.

Over the years, I've gone through several budgets, both at school boards and at the provincial level. One of the statements that was very clearly made by the US President, Barack Obama—he has described a budget as a moral document. This document should articulate the needs of the people that you serve. It should clearly outline a plan, a strategy for action. It's not just about having a press or a media event; it's not just some threats about what will be lost if this budget isn't passed, especially when you've had almost 10 years of majority government rule to secure whatever flavour of social justice fits the thinking of the day. At the heart of this debate and this budget process, someone needs to acknowledge that this budget discourse should acknowledge the fact that, going forward in the province of Ontario, it is likely that minority governments will be the reality for this province.

What people tell me outside of this Pink Palace, what I hear, is that Ontarians want politicians to get to work for them. It may be annoying to some people, it may be annoying to the new Premier, and it may feel uncomfortable, even, in some instances, because traditionally political parties in majority settings have said, "We are right and you are not. We, the governing party, don't have to listen to you because we have a majority."

Actually, I saw this time and again in committees over the years. It's so frustrating when constructive and productive ideas come forward in those committee sessions, and because there's a majority in power, they don't have to take those ideas into account. Well, this is the new culture at Queen's Park; this is the new reality of the government. We have to listen to each other. Mainly, the focus is on the Liberal government to at least listen, to take into account some of those productive ideas and see if we can actually get results for Ontarians.

That's certainly what is driving us in this corner of the House, these 18 members. We are trying to drive the conversation—the "conversation" word—to make sure

Ontarians do get some results like home care in five days. That was missing from the budget. There's talk of what home care could be like and there's talk about what home care should look like, but there certainly wasn't a timeline. I'll tell you who is concerned about that: those who live in rural communities who don't have access to the kinds of resources that exist in urban centres and the kinds of folks who have already been waiting for almost 260 days for home care. They want to see a guarantee. We want to see a guarantee, and I think we articulated that priority very clearly prior to the budget discussions. We've heard from people, and we continue to hear from people, because we're still listening to people. I know it's quite a concept.

In a majority setting, once you move past that right and wrong in this minority setting, people are also saying to us that Liberals should acknowledge that there have been mistakes that have been made; not just regret, but there have been tangible mistakes that have been made. Because in doing so, you accept accountability measures to protect them in the future. In acknowledging that mistakes have been made, you're acknowledging that you've learned from those mistakes and, therefore, moving forward, your goal is not to make those same mistakes again, be it on chemotherapy drugs or gas plants or Ornge—what have you. It's important to do so not just because it's politically expedient or the popular thing to do; honestly, the citizens of the province would likely be shocked. It would, however, be an admission that we have learned from the past and we are willing to build a better future.

Finally, I would like to suggest that the work that is before us is a new task of working together, and I support our leader, Andrea Horwath, by not settling into the backrooms to hammer out a deal that works for the Liberals. I support an open and transparent process that very clearly gives an indication of what our priorities are, because our priorities come from the people we've consulted. I supported the consultation process before the budget and after the budget, and perhaps we all need to extend some additional energy to listen to those we serve. Perhaps servant leadership is going to make a comeback. I think it is important to acknowledge that in a minority setting the rules have changed, the culture has changed. That is why we have been able to secure some affordability rates around auto insurance and some home care—pushed the portfolio on home care. Certainly, these are measures that are important to Ontarians.

While the PCs have said, "You know what? We're not going to participate in this process. We are going to abdicate our responsibility with regard to the budget," we have come to the table in a very different manner. I think it actually resonates very well with Ontarians that we are trying to bring some accountability to this setting, that we are very clearly articulating the needs of the people of this province and that we have ensured, through this open, transparent process, that we are working for the people of this province, we are trying to make this budget work and we are engaging in what people expect from

politicians. They want politicians to work harder, they want us to work for them and not for our own political interests, and they are interested in this new setting. There is a genuine interest in politics. There's a new engagement in what happens here, because people are finally seeing their true priorities reflected in the conversations that are happening in this House, and it's been a long time coming.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak following my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo. In response to her eloquent presentation earlier, I want to make sure it's on the record that what was proposed by the Minister of Finance was what we heard at every public hearing. At every public hearing across Ontario, the people of Ontario have asked us—it's not just the NDP, the third party, that made a request; it's actually Ontarians coming before the public hearings and asking our government to address some of the issues.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo talked a lot about the whole issue of transit. As someone living in the greater Toronto area, Mr. Speaker, I do feel the concerns. If the budget is passed, our government is making a commitment that we will transfer two cents per litre of gas tax to all the municipal partners. That, again, is the right thing to do, because we now guarantee—guarantee—funding for public transit and public infrastructure as well.

The other piece is that the government had to acknowledge through—the Minister of Finance commented in his remarks when he tabled the budget the fact that government will ensure new revenue tools to support transit, transportation and public transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. Again, Mr. Speaker, it is a commitment of this government, recognizing that transportation and public transit are a priority for the government. We recognize that, any one of us living in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

We have a track record, a track record now to deal with this piece. So all the opposition can say, that we cannot follow through with it—we have demonstrated this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Kitchener-Waterloo said so many good things that I would have loved to have responded to. But I'm just going to stick to the issue of the matter connected to transportation, because we are getting from some of the members, including the minister, that they're finally going to do something on the issue of transit across Toronto, the GTA and Hamilton. Quite frankly, there isn't much to be proud of. The speech from the throne said, "As an example of the changes required, Mr. Speaker, we will turn select high-occupancy vehicle lanes into high-occupancy toll lanes."

In the very budget, it says that the government is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicle lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy toll lanes. "Committed," he said. Yet to my question today in the Legislature, the minister said "Oh, no. We're committed to nothing. What we're simply going to do is we're just going to review it and study the whole matter and just look across the continent and see who else has been doing this and see what we get." But in the budget, he said he was committed to moving from HOV lanes to HO toll lanes.

So I'm saying to myself, how committed are they when on the one hand they are brave but to my question they appear to be cowardly? Here you have a government saying, "We are going to lead on this transit file," yet when we ask about his government's plan to implement the high-occupancy toll lanes, they don't know what they're going to be doing. They don't really have a commitment. So how committed are they on this file? That's the question I ask.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise and to join in the debate. I want to commend the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for bringing forward some very important points. She's right: This is a budget of the people of Ontario, and we want to see their concerns and their needs reflected in this.

I know that more than 600,000 people have been consulted. We're trying to take everybody's view into consideration, trying to do what's best to bring forward a budget that can create jobs, connect communities and give everyone a chance to succeed. That's what's really important.

I do want to make a comment, though, in regard to transit and to what the member for Trinity-Spadina was saying. He said there's not much to be proud of. Well, we're investing \$8.6 billion right now in the city of Toronto. I want to remind the member from Trinity-Spadina that the Eglinton Crosstown is 100% provincially funded. We do remember—in my constituency, at least, people remember very clearly when the hole for the subway that was going to be built 20 years ago was filled—

Interjection.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes, and we are committing more funding and investing over \$35 billion to modernize infrastructure. That is what the budget is bringing forward

These are discussions that we need to have. When you say that perhaps we don't know exactly which way we are going to go forward, again, it's got to be a way that people agree to. That's what's important: listening to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I'll return to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for her reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't know if the member from Scarborough-Agincourt had been here at the very begin-

ning, but I certainly made clear that the priorities that we put forward for consideration for this budget came from our consultation. I agree, this isn't a competition about who consults more or less, but I did appreciate getting a robocall from the finance minister asking me to be a part of the budget discussion, even though I sit on the finance committee and I sit in this House.

There is a diversity of voices that came forward to inform these requests, and I think—I mean, the PCs have made it very clear that they weren't interested in this process, and to this day right now, they're not even speaking to it. They're not even criticizing it or trying to offer some constructive criticism.

For me, it just makes no sense whatsoever that you're not actually contributing, because the weight and the responsibility that we have in this House is actually to try to make this government work for now. This budget actually has some things that would make you guys happy—which is just so ironic that you're not getting up to even speak about it.

But you know, if you don't want to do that part of your job—because I'm sure you want to talk about corporate tax loopholes, because that's the one thing we need greater clarity on as well. You've got to close those corporate tax loopholes, because those are important revenue streams to fund the public transit system.

Fair taxation needs to be a part of the conversation going forward, as well. We've been driving this conversation, day in and day out, and there's still some question about whether or not this really is a priority for the government.

But I want to thank the members from Scarborough-Agincourt, York South-Weston and Trinity-Spadina, of course, for always championing public transit. There's a lot of work to do. We are certainly ready to do the work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by, first of all, thanking everybody who took the time today to speak to this budget. That is our responsibility, and I really appreciate the members from the NDP speaking to it. I'm really disappointed that my colleagues here don't want to speak to it. In fact, when I walked in, I was surprised to see only two esteemed members of the loyal opposition bearing the full weight of their responsibility as the opposition. It's good to see that a few more members have joined, but I really am disappointed that you don't want to join the debate, because it reminds me of—I hate to say this—a sullen teenager who just walks away when they don't get their way instead of trying to find a way to make it all work.

The fact is that Ontarians sent us here in a minority Parliament. They sent us with the message that all three of us have to somehow find a way to work together. I appreciate all of those who try, even under the most trying circumstances, to make this work, and I'm disappointed in those who choose not to try to make this work.

1610

Coming to the budget, it's titled A Prosperous and Fair Ontario. I did some research going back 17 years on the different titles of Ontario budgets, and I found titles like this: Investing in the Future, Foundations for Prosperity, jobs and growth, Growing a Stronger Ontario. I do want to say that these are titles chosen over the past 17 years, so not any one government but all stripes of government. But nowhere did I find the word "fair." So for the first time in at least 17 years, perhaps more, in the history of Ontario, we have a government that wants not just a prosperous Ontario but a fair Ontario.

I've said this before and I'm going to say it again, and I know that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo made reference to this earlier in a similar vein: Budgets are not just tables and numbers. Instead, a budget is really a reflection of a government's value system, and more importantly, the value system of the people a democratic government represents, a value system that says a prosperous Ontario is meaningful only when it is also a fair Ontario, an Ontario that provides every Ontarian a fair chance to succeed. That is why this is a budget that I am so proud of.

It addresses the things that the residents of Mississauga East–Cooksville and the residents of this great province talk about every day. It talks about the issues that Ontarians are speaking about at their dining tables, at the water cooler, on their front lawns as they mow the early spring grass, issues that Ontarians care about in their everyday lives—issues like the future of our children. What will their future be like? Will they have opportunities similar to the opportunities previous generations have had? They worry about job security. They also worry about how they are going to take care of their parents. What do we have to do in an aging society? How do we look after our parents in a world where both spouses working is common? They talk about the time it takes to get to work every day. They talk about saving for retirement. They talk about saving for a long-dreamt-of holiday. These are the things that Ontarians talk about at the dining table, and these are the things that this budget represents and that this budget addresses.

Let me give you some examples of the way this budget addresses the everyday issues of Ontarians. Things like our 15% average reduction in auto insurance, our youth employment strategy, our investment in more home care for seniors, our measures to help small businesses stay competitive, our plan to help entrepreneurs, our investment in infrastructure—all address the things that Ontarians talk about, worry about and want their government to address. I could keep going on. Each and every single one of these budget measures speaks directly to what the residents of Mississauga East–Cooksville talk about at the water cooler. That is why I think it is simplistic and naive to say things like, "This is an NDP budget," or "This is not a Conservative budget," or "This is a Liberal budget." Because the fact is, this is a budget of the people of Ontario. This is quite simply a budget for the times, a budget that speaks to the

needs of Ontarians, a budget that is perfect for the times we live in.

There is another thing that Ontarians want, something that goes beyond the material, beyond job security, beyond affordable college tuition, beyond auto insurance rates—something more fundamental. And that something that Ontarians want is fairness. Like most members in this Legislature, I try to meet every constituent who asks to meet with me. They come into my office with all sorts of issues, issues that I'm sure every single one of us is familiar with, issues like WSIB, access to health care, their difficulties in finding a job, a landlord from hell. But when all is said and done, the subtext of every single one of these issues is a cry for fairness. All that Ontarians ask for at the end of the day is a fair chance, a fair opportunity, and that is what this budget is going to deliver.

That is why I ask that all of us work together to make this budget work, because this budget, I think, responds to the needs of the people of Ontario and our times. And I've said that I think this is a budget that hits the right tone for the times we live in. But there is always time to work together in committee, so to throw the baby out with the bathwater, to vote against it, makes no sense when it hits most of the right buttons.

As we all know, many of us sat on SCOFEA together and we toured all over Ontario, so this is a budget that was not made in a vacuum. This is a budget that was written after listening to thousands and thousands of Ontarians.

I do want to speak to one thing, which is that the member from—I forget the riding—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'll help you out. Who is it?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity–Spadina.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Trinity–Spadina—earlier spoke about something about being cowardly. I wanted to address that because I think that what is cowardly is not to make a decision, to dither. True courage, I would like to say, is to make a decision one way or another instead of constantly saying that this is good but we want more. There's a word in the business world for that, and that's called deal creep. You ask for something; it's given in good faith; you work out the parameters. But to constantly say, "Well, yeah, I know, we asked for that but we want this now and this now," that's not fair to Ontarians.

When you talk about courage, let's take a stand. What are you afraid of? Let's take a stand. I think this is a great budget. I invite all of us to work on it. If there are bits and bobs of it that you don't like, we can talk about it and address it in committee. That's why I just wanted to talk about the fact that we all need to work together.

Finally, Speaker, I'd like to wrap up and just say that this is a budget that I believe was written after listening to Ontarians across the province. I know that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo alluded to the fact that she got a call from the finance minister, which is just testimony to the fact of how broad our outreach was. We used all sorts of modern technology to reach out to as many Ontarians as we could.

The most important thing is that we are doing all of this without losing sight of our single most important goal, which is to balance the books. Ontarians intuitively know that we cannot live off of a credit card forever. They understand that. They know that you can use a credit card to fix a leaky roof; you can use a credit card to just buy a fancy car. That's important. They get that, they understand that because they own their own homes and they want a government that will balance the books but not on the backs of the most vulnerable, not by just firing thousands and tens of thousands of people, not by being mean but by being fair. That I believe this budget accomplishes. It's a budget that looks to balancing our books, that's fiscally responsible but at the same time builds the foundations for a prosperous Ontario and a fair Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville talks about how this government and this budget speak about fairness. You didn't talk about justice; correct? Just fairness, more or less, for everyday people, men and women of this province? I was just thinking about it because this government has a very, very poor record in this regard, especially in the area of fairness to the people who are most in need. You've got to take this into account: Income disparity of the top 20% and the lowest 20% is the biggest—income disparity in Canada is why, but Ontario has the biggest income disparity of the top 20% and the lower 20% of people, and it's going to get worse in Ontario. The poverty rate fell in five provinces in the last 25 years but it has increased in the other five, and Ontario is at the high end of those poverty rates.

When it comes to affordable housing, Ontario has the worst record of affordable housing. You've got to work on this issue of "fair," because I don't know if you have a handle on it.

1620

The other one is that you have the poorest funding of public services in Canada, the poorest as it relates to health care, education, issues of justice and disability benefits.

And then you've got another little problem as it relates to a fair society: We have the highest tuition fees in the country. I know you're probably number 10; I understand that. But you have a terrible record with respect to a fair society, and unless you do something serious, you ain't gaining nowhere and this budget doesn't get us there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville made a remarkable address this afternoon, highlighting many of the positive aspects about the speech. She highlighted, of course, our sense of fairness that all Ontarians appreciate each and every day.

We're making a significant move on the Ontario Child Benefit, which the late June Callwood, a remarkable Canadian, said was the most progressive thing done to

alleviate poverty in the province of Ontario in four decades, when we introduced it.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Who said that?

Hon. Jeff Leal: That was the late June Callwood, a remarkable Canadian and somebody we should all listen to in many ways.

The member didn't touch upon something I think is so important. Just recently, the Mowat Centre released a study that said hard-working Ontarians are putting \$11 billion into equalization. Let us think about that for a moment. People talk about \$7-a-day daycare in the province of Quebec. They talk about low tuition fees in the province of Quebec. Eureka, we know how that has happened. It is because the hard-working men and women in Ontario, through equalization, are providing that to our fellow Canadians in the province of Quebec.

I know my friend from Trinity–Spadina will want to have a federal-provincial conference, when we get the Prime Minister to the table, to make sure we change the policy of equalization so that Ontarians can keep more of their hard-working dollars and we can put those hard-working dollars into such things as daycare. In fact, we've made great progress on affordable housing, because we're the government that got back into the business of affordable housing after a decade of a desert of austerity when there were no investments made in affordable housing in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased that the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville highlighted some of these important issues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. I cannot agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to make the point that the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville got up and talked about the quorum here. The quorum has been an issue today. The PCs are not participating, but at least they've shown up. The quorum has actually sort of been on that side of the House. So let's be clear about who's showed up to work today and who hasn't.

Also, the member mentioned that "fair" is in the title of this budget. Let's also be clear that just because you put "fair" in the title doesn't make the budget so. That's what we're trying to do: actually put some meat and bones on a budget and some tools of accountability so that the people in the province will understand what they're getting for the money they are investing in this.

Quite honestly, "fair" is perhaps one of the more over-used words in this House, like "conversation." But you can't tell the people who are in line at food banks and homeless shelters that life is fair for them, because those numbers are actually up. They are up, and they have been steadily rising over the last 10 years. So if we're going to have an honest conversation about fairness, then we should be honest about what really is happening in the province of Ontario.

The child care comment resonates very well with me, because when you invest—this is about strategic investment, about priorities of the people of this province. When you invest \$1 in child care, you get a \$7 return. That's a good investment. That's a good return on investment. Moving gas plants around the province like chess pieces? That's not such a good investment for the people of this province.

So the work is before us. There's a lot of work to do, but please remember what fair means.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to first thank the members from Trinity-Spadina and Kitchener-Waterloo for taking the time to respond to my comments, as well as the member from—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his very succinct—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: His profound remarks.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —and very profound remarks.

I just want to say that nobody has a monopoly on fairness. My point was that this is the first time in 17 years that somebody, that some government, has taken the initiative to put fairness front and centre in their budget.

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No, no. The budget speaks to that, and I'm going to speak to some of those. The welfare reform that has been spoken about many times is a great example of great public policy that helps make Ontario fairer but also helps Ontario become more productive. The Ontario Child Benefit—we've talked about it, but again, we plan to increase it by \$100.

But there's one thing I want to talk about that nobody has talked about today, which is rent control. It is this government that brought in a new law, effective January 31, 2013, that caps the maximum that a landlord can increase rent by 2.5% or inflation, whichever is lower. I do want to say, because I've said that nobody has a monopoly on fairness, that one of the things that I did was—did you know that it was under the NDP that rents in Ontario were the highest? Not today; it was under the NDP that rents in Ontario were the highest.

All of this is to say that nobody has a corner on fairness. We are trying hard. Our initiatives show—we have a slew of initiatives that show that we are working hard to make Ontario not only more prosperous, but more fair.

I stand by this budget. It's a very good budget, and we welcome constructive criticism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. McNaughton assumes ballot item number 33 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 47.

Before I ask for further debate, I would remind all members that it is not really helpful nor appropriate to

point out the absence of other members in this chamber. Obviously, we have to maintain a quorum, but I would ask them not to make reference to the absence of other members.

Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It is an honour and a pleasure to be able to rise and share my thoughts on the 2013 budget. I'd like to start off by thanking each and every person who took the time to return my 2013 budget survey, which was sent out to every home in the Kenora-Rainy River riding. I'm pleased to report that, for the second straight year, I was overwhelmed by the response. It shows just how much the people in northwestern Ontario care about the important decisions that are being made right now, and all the time, in this Legislature.

I would also like to thank each person who has taken time out of their day to speak to me and share their concerns. Over the past few weeks, I've met with hundreds, if not thousands, of residents across the riding. Whether it was at trade shows in Red Lake, Dryden, Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River, or through constituency appointments, emails or phone calls, residents of Kenora-Rainy River came through with their feedback, suggestions and priorities. I really appreciate the information that they have shared with me.

For those who have not filled out this survey, I encourage you, if you're watching this at home, to take a moment to share your thoughts, to pop it in the mail to me. You may not realize it, but the feedback you give me is invaluable, and it's necessary for me to be able to represent your interests in Queen's Park. To represent you effectively, I need to hear from you. I want to reiterate that I sincerely appreciate all of the time and the effort that people across my riding have taken to share with me their thoughts. I encourage them to keep the feedback coming.

With that in mind, I'd like to share some of that feedback with this House. As would be expected by anyone aware of the present situation in northwestern Ontario, the people of Kenora-Rainy River are not happy with this government's performance. When asked, "How would you rate the current government?", a whopping 62% responded that this government is out of touch, while only five respondents—that's not a percentage; there were only five of them—indicated that the government is in touch.

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I'd like to remind you that I sent this survey out to more than 28,000 households in the Kenora-Rainy River riding. When asked, "On what issue is the government performing the best?", the responses ranged from "Nothing" to "Ripping us off," "Looking after the south" and "Wasting money." When asked which areas of the government are performing the worst, responses ranged from things like "Hydro rates" to "Cost of living" and "Treating us all equally." I just want to point out that I didn't have a list of options to choose from; there was a fill-in-the-blank for this, because I wanted to get a

sense—not a directed sense—of what people are thinking about what's going on in Ontario today.

The responses to the survey I sent out show a critical disconnect between the people living in northwestern Ontario and the government, which is supposed to be the government for the entire province and not just a few select communities that contain enough seats to allow a party to cruise to victory.

I've spoken out about northern alienation before, but these numbers really tell the story of how poorly the government is performing.

That said, northerners are realistic. When it comes to defeating the budget, most of them are saying, "It depends on the budget," or that they're not sure. Despite an overwhelming level of frustration with this government, they're willing to give things a chance. They're saying things like, "Take your time. Review the budget. See if some of our key priorities are met. If they are, then allow the budget to pass and continue to fight for fairness and equality in a province where we're supposed to be equal partners. If they're not," they tell me, "we'll take our chances with an election and we'll see where that gets us," although most would prefer to avoid the \$100-million election in exchange for meaningful action on the issues that matter the most for them.

It's for that reason that I join my caucus colleagues to outline priorities for the budget. I have to say, it's nice to have some major northern priorities among the five things that we sought in this budget, such as lower auto insurance and a five-day home care guarantee. I think it's fair to say that things like auto insurance and home care are higher priorities in the north because we don't have the luxury of public transit as people who live in communities like Toronto and Mississauga and other places do, which makes the use of our vehicles essential to northern life.

Northerners are fed up with high insurance premiums. In fact, of the surveys that I received, a whopping 90% of the respondents labelled "Lower insurance premiums" as either a high or extremely high priority. Over the past few weeks, I've had people seek me out at public events to thank me and the NDP for the work that we're doing on this file because we in the north are paying far too much for a service that the province requires us to have and for a mode of transportation where there are virtually no other options.

It's true that this government has made changes. Unfortunately, those changes have benefited the insurance industry and not the consumer. Benefits were basically cut in half. Despite this, insurance premiums remained about the same. Reform is needed, and our proposal to cut premiums by 15% meets that. Unfortunately, though, with this government, while acknowledging a vague goal of hoping to accomplish this cut, they failed to set deadlines to provide any real guarantees, and the government is expecting us to take it at its word.

We in northwestern Ontario are a little skeptical because we've seen Liberal promises before that involve the announcement coming first, and the plan—if there

ever is one—coming second. I'll give you a few examples:

—the announcement of the Aspenware plant in Dryden. There was a bunch of clamouring to announce this. It got everybody's hopes up and then it didn't appear.

—the twinning of Highway 17 near Kenora, which has been announced multiple times, yet we still haven't seen any work undertaken.

—even the recent decision to allegedly save the Experimental Lakes area. This government has shown time and time again that it's only concerned with the announcement and not the results, and that simply isn't good enough for those of us living in the northwest.

Similarly, we the NDP have identified home care as a service that is in desperate need of attention. Once again, this is more of an issue in the north, particularly in the northwest, than it is in the south. In southern Ontario, most communities aren't doing too badly when it comes to delivering home care services. Reform is still needed, but the wait times might be about a week or two. In my region, people are waiting up to six months or they're being denied service altogether because it just isn't available in their community.

This past Friday I took part in RNAO's Take Your MPP to Work day in Sioux Lookout, and I saw first-hand how urgently an investment is needed. At any one time, one third to one half of the hospital beds are being occupied by individuals in need of long-term care and home care. It boggles the mind: one third to one half adding cost to the system because proper investments haven't been made in northern health care.

Families literally have to fight to have their relatives stay in Sioux Lookout because many are being sent out to health care facilities across the region, at a distance of several hundred kilometres, where they are kept in virtual isolation with no family or friends for support because this government still refuses to pay close attention to the health care crisis that's facing northern communities.

One person who I met in the hospital has been there since October because the home care services he needs cannot be met. He's away from his family. He's suffering, his family is suffering and the system is suffering because the government cannot provide home care services in the northwest in a timely and effective manner, and that is shameful. But what's even more shameful is the fact that each and every patient who is admitted who could be in another facility or kept at home with adequate home care is costing the system \$2,000 per day. By failing to make strong commitments to ensure access is available, we are tapping the system dry. Something needs to change.

This is why almost every respondent to my survey identified a five-day home care guarantee as essential. While the government has listened to us and promised more money—actually, much more money than what we believe is needed to effectively implement a five-day home care guarantee—they refused to commit to a guarantee. My concern is—because it seems like it's been this

way in every other part of the health care system in the province—that the government improves the service in the south but we in the north are left in the cold, and that’s my concern because we’ve seen it time and time again.

The people of northwestern Ontario are fed up with health care that isn’t equally applied across the province. We’re fed up with the province not making firm commitments to improve access to the service. Frankly, the failure of this government to set firm goals shows that they aren’t committed. This is about fairness and this is about justice for the north.

The new Premier says she wants to be the social justice Premier. Well, social justice isn’t just the ability to say, “My policies aren’t as bad as the last guy’s.” It’s not about that. The Premier has been in office for a few months now and we’re still waiting to hear her grand plan, we’re still waiting to hear how she’s different and we’re running out of patience.

We need to see a budget that includes firm commitments to improve our situation. We need to see this province accept proposals to increase accountability, such as a financial accountability office, which can curb this government’s reckless spending, and we need to see Ombudsman oversight for health care services to ensure that we in the north can go to the government and say that we’re not being treated equally. Speaker, things need to change; the ball is in the government’s court.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I want to say to her that as one who’s been around this place for a long time, I’m actually quite impressed with what you said. I think you bring to this chamber a pragmatic perspective, one that’s forged in consultation with your folk, which I think is good. Your emphasis on northern issues is appropriate.

I spent a couple of days with your colleague John Vanthof—sorry, the member from whatever and whatever—and it was great. We picked up a great perspective about some of the opportunities for, say, agriculture in the north. It’s untapped. I didn’t know there were 2.3 million acres of high-quality arable land in northern Ontario just waiting for someone to come and farm it, nor that farming was the number one economy up in the north in terms of longevity. So it does help to have those conversations and to update one another about things.

I want to thank you for that and for your emphasis on fairness and justice. I want to say that I share that very much. I appreciate much of what was shared from the other side of the House. The gap between the richest and the poor is continuing to grow, and I think it’s the most shameful thing that all governments at all three levels have not been able to deal with.

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I just want to end by quoting words from Phil Ochs’s song that were recently sung at our colleague’s memorial service. The song goes:

“All my days won’t be dances of delight when I’m gone

“And the sands will be shifting from my sight when I’m gone

“Can’t add my name into the fight while I’m gone

“So I guess I’ll—or we’ll—“have to do it while I’m”—we’re—“here.”

Let’s get on with it. Let’s keep having these good conversations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who is a strong advocate for the north and for her constituency, which she brings to this Legislature each and every day. The things she speaks about, by way of making sure that governments are held accountable are to have the Ombudsman have oversight over hospitals and long-term care—God knows we need that. There are a couple of Liberal members who continually say they support this, and we hope they have sway in that government, because so far we have not been victorious.

It’s a simple thing. Most other provinces have Ombudsman oversight, over hospitals in particular. We spend approximately \$23 billion to \$26 billion on that file, and we ought to be able to have somebody who says, “Something has gone wrong there, and they can come to me. I will investigate it and recommend changes.” This Liberal government has been afraid to do that for a long time. Why? It is a way to be held accountable, and you ought to want that, otherwise people will say you don’t want to be held accountable.

Furthermore, the NDP has been pushing you for a financial accountability office, à la Monsieur Page at the federal level, who held Conservatives accountable for many, many years. I loved to read his reports where he would investigate government stories on any file and reveal the truth each and every time: “Here’s what the government said and here are the facts.” That’s what we need, such an accountability office, as the NDP is proposing, to make us politicians more accountable. Isn’t that what we want, really?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Sorry, I wasn’t sure if you were looking at me—not a problem.

It’s my pleasure, Speaker, to rise in response to the member from Kenora–Rainy River and her comments. Thank you for your comments. They were very reflective of what you’ve been hearing in your constituency, the surveys that you’ve been taking—very reasonable comments—so we thank you for that.

I thank you for that, as opposed to the opposition, who, interestingly enough, doesn’t want to take part in this debate—probably one of the biggest debates we should be having, with respect to the budget of the province of Ontario. We know they want to spend hours and

hours debating every other bill that's in front of this House, but not on the budget—but I digress on this.

I too have been listening to my constituents over the last week or so since the budget has come out. I was with many people over the weekend, in my office, at chamber events, at different events—when I'm out shopping. What I'm hearing from everyone that I speak to is that this budget must go through. This budget must pass. There are a lot of elements of this budget that individuals can support.

We say, "Whose priorities are these that are reflected in this budget?" Well, it reflects what I hear in my constituency office. It reflects what all of our members, I'm sure, hear when they are out in our communities. There's no surprise that what's in this budget is with respect to what we hear from our people—it's the priorities of Ontarians; it's the priorities of the individuals that we serve, that we are here to govern for.

When I look at the budget, I'm looking at the investments that we're looking at for youth employment, an area that was—the first job that I had out of university was working in youth employment. It speaks to the fairness and justice components of our society—again, areas that I have been working on my entire working life. We've been speaking about consultations. We consulted through a number of different elements, through SCOFEA consultations and budgets; we've gone all over the community, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

I'll now return to the member for Kenora–Rainy River for her reply.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I want to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Trinity–Spadina and the Minister of Children and Youth Services for their comments.

I have to admit—I believe I've said this in the House before—that when I was first elected in 2011 and I saw the results coming in on the screen and that we had a minority government, I was pretty excited. I mean, I'll admit that. I thought that it would be a good opportunity for change, that it would be a good opportunity for us to work together, to cast aside some of those partisan shackles that we all tend to wear at various points.

I'm honestly pretty happy to see that this budget has developed to be what it is. I mean, there's still some room for improvement, but I think it's important to say that it is an important step forward, that we were able to get a couple of the parties together, and we were able to work together in the best interests of Ontarians. That's what I see as a big part of my job.

I talked about the surveys. A big part of my job, and I believe it's a big part of all of our jobs, is to engage the people who are in our ridings, to restore some of that faith that they have in the political process. I hope, for the people who are watching this at home or if they're watching it on YouTube later, that they see that cause and effect, that connection, that correlation between them taking the time to fill out the surveys and them seeing

that their comments are being reflected in the discussion and the debate that we're having in this House, and for them to have faith in the process. If people get complacent, we can have a very dangerous government.

Anyway, I want to thank the members, and the people of Kenora–Rainy River.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight, the opportunity—I only have 10 minutes. I could probably take three or four hours, but I will be restricted to 10 minutes, and then I would—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's about quarter to 5. The good folks of Peterborough riding, I think, are now tuning in, just before they sit down to enjoy their supper. I want to extend best wishes to all the mothers and grandmothers in my riding. Yesterday was Mother's Day. I know we were all out celebrating the great contribution that mothers and grandmothers make.

Interjection: How about the Maple Leafs?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, I'm a Montreal Canadiens fan, but good luck to the Leafs tonight. They used to hold their training camp in Peterborough at the old Empress Hotel. I could tell a lot of stories about that, but I want to talk about the budget this afternoon.

First of all, I want to make a note about the budget; I think it's important. Some 40% of my riding is rural, and I want to talk about agriculture for a moment. The agriculture budget has increased by \$5.8 million as we get into this fiscal year of 2013-14.

I know I was in Havelock on Saturday, as I said earlier today. I had the opportunity to chat with one of the most distinguished ag ministers in the history of this province, the Honourable Elmer Buchanan. Elmer was in charge of Celebrate Havelock. I was down there; it's a spring show. It's great; 60 Havelock businesses were there. Elmer told me he was impressed that we increased the ag budget this year by \$5.8 million. Of course, we know the great job that he's doing with the horse racing panel.

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Member from Sarnia, don't run away. The member from Sarnia—I was working with him to help his racetrack out at Hiawatha, and we're all looking forward to that first race at Hiawatha. I don't know the horses all that well there, but I do know it will be a great day when they're back racing at Hiawatha. I want to thank the member from Sarnia. He was working with us to make that happen, so that's a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, as I talk about agriculture this afternoon—I know you're a great supporter of supply management—and most of your colleagues—but I was highly distressed on Thursday when I read the remarks from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and—

Mr. Peter Shurman: A great man.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, he's not a supporter of supply management, because I want to get on the record what he said. I know most of the majority of that caucus over

there do support supply management. But I want the people—Steve Brackenridge, who's president of the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture—to listen to what Mr. Hillier said on Thursday. "You see, quota is a legal requirement for having turkeys, chickens, eggs or cows in Canada and in Ontario, and if you're not a member of that cartel"—reference to supply management—"then you are often acting illegally and in contravention of the law."

1650

I want to spend a moment on that, because when I was doing my economics degree, one of the requirements was to study supply management. Supply management is the best agricultural model in the world, because it's based on a good return for the people who are delivering a product, it provides great prices for the consumer and it allows us to sustain an important part of our agricultural system.

Let's put this in perspective. Wednesday will be Peterborough Day, the fifth annual Peterborough Day, so, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to welcome you and your colleagues. I know you've attended in other years, and I'll see you there on Wednesday.

One of the participants will be Kawartha Dairy. If you go to Kawartha Dairy, you can buy three bags of 1% milk for \$3.99. If I do my south-end math from Peterborough, that's \$1.33 per bag of milk.

When I take Braden and Shanae to see the Petes play at the hockey—they didn't make the playoffs this year, but next year they'll be there—or the Peterborough Lakers, if I take them to the concession stand when they're watching that, they want a bottle of water. Mr. Speaker, you'd be surprised what you pay for a bottle of water in the Memorial Centre: \$2.25. So, a bag of 1% milk from Kawartha Dairy: \$1.33; \$2.25 for a bottle of Neilson's water. Mr. Speaker, you tell me the value of supply management: \$1.33 versus \$2.25.

That case should be explained to your colleague the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington about the value of supply management. I know, in your caucus meeting tomorrow, you'll surround him and you'll tell him about all the merits of supply management. I know you'll do that, Mr. Speaker. I trust you to do that.

Let's get on to the budget here. I didn't mean to digress, but I get upset when somebody attacks supply management.

When you build a budget in Peterborough, you do it from two perspectives. You go and consult with the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, and then you consult with the Peterborough poverty reduction committee. Look, I also consulted with a mother from the great riding of Kitchener—Waterloo, a great friend of mine, a great person. I had a chance to talk to her about the budget about a week ago.

When it comes to the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, what did they want in the budget? I could reference a number of pages. We'll start with page 261, a

very important page in the budget. Bear with me, Mr. Speaker; I'll get there in a moment—261.

In fact, why is this so important? Well, the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce asked us to change the exemption on the employer health tax—that's the EHT—on payroll for small businesses. We listened to them very clearly. We're now going to move that exemption to \$450,000. That will have a significant impact for small businesses in the province of Ontario. A lot of them are right in my riding of Peterborough. We're prepared to index every year after 2014. That will have significance for small businesses, to use those extra dollars to hire people—very, very important.

The other thing that's important to companies like GE in my riding, and Quaker Oats and Siemens is, what we did was—Jim Flaherty, God bless him, did the important thing in his budget to accelerate the capital cost allowance for new machinery in the province of Ontario. We thought, "Mr. Flaherty; federal Minister of Finance—a great idea," so we thought we would incorporate that into our budget so that Ontario will mirror the capital cost allowance that's moving forward federally. I know that's something the loyal opposition would want.

Reducing the employer health tax credit and the capital cost allowance—that's why I'm surprised they're not going to support this budget. Two things that were suggested to us by the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and that great finance minister in Ottawa, Mr. Flaherty—so why wouldn't you be on board to support your good friend Jim? Very important.

I want to get to the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network. It's chaired by Stephen Kylie of Peterborough, a very successful lawyer and a very good friend of mine. I want to reference page 95. Page 95 is very important because the Peterborough poverty reduction group has talked about the Ontario Child Benefit, and they're pleased to see that the OCB would be moving to \$1,210 as of July 1. That's why this budget is somewhat time-sensitive: to make sure that we get that provision in place. It's very important for low-income earners. These increases will extend the OCB to an additional 90,000 children in 46,000 families in the province of Ontario. My goodness, Mr. Speaker; those are families from Cochrane to Kenora, from Cobourg to Cobocouk, from Peterborough to Petrolia. All those families and every family in between will be helped.

The other thing that's important and that we've been talking about for years when it comes to alleviating poverty in the province of Ontario is the earnings of people who work on ODSP and OW. It's something, I believe, that is contained in one of the official opposition's white papers. We thought that was a good idea. We wanted to take that and incorporate into our budget. I believe there will be no clawback for the first \$200 of earnings for people who are on ODSP and OW. That's very important, because they want to work, they want to contribute to their communities, and we want to reward

them by not clawing back and by allowing them to keep up some of their earnings.

In my riding of Peterborough, I have a fairly high degree of seniors. I know that home care is so important to them. There was a proposal that was put on the table by the third party, a very worthy proposal: \$30 million. We looked at that. We said, "That's not enough for our seniors in the province of Ontario." So our investment will be six times that amount: \$180 million to provide home care for seniors right across this great province. In fact, we're also increasing dollar-amount support for long-term-care homes by 2%. Instead of flatlining, we're going to add 2% to that plan.

Mr. Speaker, when I was asked about the budget in Peterborough, I said that it's a budget for all. It incorporates things from the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, it incorporates things from the Peterborough poverty reduction group, and the good advice from the mother of the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. You can't beat that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough got two things right: One was the capital cost allowance, and number two was showing some respect for Minister Flaherty. I think in those cases, I agree with him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't know what's going on over there. One minute you're sullen and sulky; the next minute you're standing up and setting the record straight. But at least you're here.

I do want to address some of the comments that were made by the Minister of Rural Affairs. You've made a point for us, and I want to thank you for that. You pointed out the fact that we asked for a five-day home care guarantee, costed out at \$30 million. We fully explained where that money would be coming from—not one extra dime to add to the deficit or the debt or whatever. Then you guys came to the table, and you said, "You know what? It's true; we haven't done anything on home care. It's abysmal, and 6,100 people are on that wait-list." You finally acknowledge that there has been such a lack of progress and action on home care, and as Rosie says, "God love you." You finally said, "Okay, we're going to do something," and then you up the ante. You up the ante by seven times, but you haven't explained where you're getting that money from. So you can understand why we are concerned, and you can understand why we don't trust that you actually have that money, that that is real money.

That is why we have made, I think, a very rational, pragmatic recommendation for a financial accountability office so that we would have a full understanding of where that money is going to come from and, actually, more importantly, the people of this province will have a good understanding that you're not taking the hydrotherapy pool out of London-Fanshawe—you're not

taking the service away from those seniors—in order to make a promise in this budget.

I think the financial accountability office warrants attention. I think it is needed. I think you also can then explain where that money is coming from. Let's get down to that financial accountability, I think.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1700

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to stand in my place here today in the House to respond to the member from Peterborough, the Minister of Rural Affairs, and his frankly outstanding comments regarding this year's budget. I find it extremely hard to believe that anyone in this chamber would have been able to listen to the information put forward by the member from Peterborough—to understand how this particular budget, this year's budget, has responded to the concerns and to the hopes of the people who live in his particular constituency, a great part of Ontario. I know that this member is doing simply outstanding work as the Minister of Rural Affairs and that he is leading the charge from this side in those parts of Ontario that want to see meaningful improvement, which really is what this particular budget is all about.

As I said last week when I spoke on the budget, we are moving forward with a balanced plan, a responsible plan, a plan that's going to make sure that Ontario's economic recovery remains solid, that we continue to create jobs right across the province of Ontario, that we're on track to balance our books by 2017-18. We are the only government in Canada that over the last few years has been hitting if not improving upon all of our deficit reduction targets—to see the kind of impressive investments continued and impressive investments in crucial infrastructure: \$35 billion to be spent over three years on roads, highways, bridges and hospitals, whatever the case may be, employing tens of thousands of women and men across the province of Ontario.

It's exactly that kind of budget that we put forward. I encourage members opposite, from both caucuses, to take a serious look at the budget, like I said last week, and consider supporting it so that we can continue to move Ontario forward. The members of the third party have certainly put some interesting ideas out there in the public domain. I would call on the members of the official opposition to put aside the partisan games that they've been spinning over the last number of weeks and months and do what's right for the people of Ontario and to support this year's budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to concur with my colleague from Durham. I too support the member's thought in regard to the outstanding job the finance minister at the federal level, Mr. Flaherty, is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the Minister of Rural Affairs for his reply.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank, for the very kind comments, my good friend the member from Durham, my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo, my friend from Vaughan and my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Look, the options are clear. I read an interesting article not too long ago in the New York Times, in the financial section. They were talking about why governments should avoid the desert of austerity. The gist of the article was—they were talking about Mitt Romney, John Boehner, Sarah Palin and that cast of characters that are in public life south of the border. They said they're strong advocates of the desert of austerity, and they made the linkage to their kinds of suggestions to what we're seeing in Europe today. When you put the brakes on what government should be involved with, you get into the desert of austerity, you push unemployment up to 25% or 30%, aggregate demand in an economy is severely restricted and you get into the problems that you have.

This budget, the budget presented by this government, is not a Liberal budget, it's not a Progressive Conservative budget and it's not an NDP budget; it's a budget for all Ontarians. When you take a thoughtful approach to this budget, you see that it strikes the right balance: strategic investments, program restraint to make sure we can keep moving the economy forward in a very productive way, and I think that's important—keep making investments in health care, in education, in rural affairs—a small budget in rural affairs; it will put those dollars to work very effectively for the rural citizens of the province of Ontario.

The budget, as I said, just strikes the right balance. I'm looking for a vote of confidence in this budget so we can move this budget forward and start helping everyday Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: When you only have 10 minutes, you've got to focus your time. You're quite right, member from Peterborough. So I'm going to try to do that. I'll focus my remarks—well, focus. I will start by talking about the transportation plan that Liberals are so proud of, because in the last couple of months, the Premier and the Liberals have been getting a great deal of praise about what they're going to do to implement the Big Move, Metrolinx's big \$50-billion move to get people moving in the GTA and Hamilton. It's impressive. It really is truly impressive, because you hear the Premier saying, “We've got to do it. We've got to tax; it's a question of which tax,” and so far we don't have a clue which tax they want to bring forward.

But the one thing they did bring in this budget—it's on page 33, for those of you who carry this like a Bible on the Liberal side. If you don't mind turning to page 33, because on page 32—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A few of you have the budget. There you go. Just take it all out. There you are.

On page 32, you talk about the Big Move at the bottom of the page. Then you go to page 33—the next

one, exactly. At the top, it says, “The province is committing”—“committing,” not thinking about, not studying it, but “committing,” which means we're going to do it; that's what I think it means—“to convert select high-occupancy vehicle ... lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy toll ... lanes, in which carpooling drivers would continue to drive for free, but other drivers would be able to choose to drive in these lanes for a toll.” This suggests to me that the government is thinking that one of the ways to get the Big Move to happen is to move from HOV lanes—high-occupancy volume lanes—to HOT, where you actually ask individual drivers to pay a toll to have the privilege to be in that lane. It sounds interesting.

I asked the Minister of Transportation twice a question on this very issue, because, you see, there were no details here, so I thought we should ask him a question about it. I asked the minister for details about his government's plan to implement high-occupancy toll lanes in the province. For the life of me, I just didn't get an answer—twice—because once, as the question failed, I thought, “Let me try again,” and twice I didn't get an answer, which is highly unusual for this minister, because he's very thorough, generally, and very knowledgeable. He usually likes to give answers, except on this one.

The problem I have around this is that the KPMG report to Metrolinx said that it costs about \$700,000 to implement one kilometre of high-occupancy toll lanes. That's a whole lot of money. We're talking about \$715,000 just for the guardrails per kilometre. That's a whole heap of money, just to implement something around which we know nothing about what pecunia we're going to have as a government to pay for the Big Move.

I'd remind you, as well, that it's \$650,000 for each gantry, and that is the overhead crane upon which the tolling technology would be mounted—that's more or less a fair description, probably. So, \$715,000 for the guardrails and \$660,000 for these gantries—now, add it all up, because some of you are good at math. I'm not very good at it, but some of you are really good at it.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I suspect even Tories like to add these numbers up—

Interjection: We like to add.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—except when they were in government and they sold the 407 for \$1.2 billion for 100 years. They're good managers; they know how to add. So I thought that maybe the Liberals knew how to add even better, because I'm not very good at it. We saw from the Tories how good they were, and I wanted to ask the Liberals how good they are with their numbers. So \$715,000 for the guardrails and \$660,000 for these gantries; I thought, hmm, if you add it all up per kilometre, that's a whole heap of money. We're talking possibly, what, \$300 million or \$400 million just to set the infrastructure for this? By the time you get a penny back, you say to yourself, is it really worth doing this?

Because that's the question I ask the minister, because I was really, really nervous about the whole thing.

1710

I say to you that Metrolinx puts the initial revenue from the HOT at a mere \$25 million a year. So I think to myself, the government says they're going to be making \$250 million out of this; that's why I asked for the details. Metrolinx says, at best, we might get \$25 million. Marchese says, holy cow, it's going to cost \$340 million just to build the structure for this.

Then I say, how many of these single drivers are going to be in these HOV lanes enough to be able to recover some of that dough from this infrastructure? I think to myself, not much, right? Nihil, zero, nada. So you press the minister because you say to yourself, maybe he's got answers that I'm not familiar with. Once he said he was going to do this slowly and I thought, "Okay, maybe when he says it slowly I'll understand it better." It didn't help because there was no answer, not fast or slow; there was no answer.

My worry is that this scheme that the government is thinking about implementing is going to be risky, is going to be costly and it's going to involve a new, complicated payment system for the sake, what, of potentially \$25 million when it's going to cost a heck of a lot more to build? I think the government's partners, the private sector partners, are salivating; I can see the saliva drips just coming down each side of the mouth, thinking, "This is going to be good. This is going to be really, really good," because Presto—remember Presto? It was going to cost \$250 million initially to have this new payment system. We are now up at \$750 million and still salivating with enjoyment, and the plan isn't yet implemented. Toronto, the biggest, hasn't yet come on board, and we've spent \$750 million thus far.

You understand why I say salivating, right? Because the private sector folks—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: God bless.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—God bless, both Tories and Liberals, they love it—a new scheme; a new scheme for a new pecunia to be had. You know who pays in the end? The poor folks out there who are being asked to pay a new fee. Not income taxes, progressive, not corporate tax, God forbid, no, no corporate taxes, but the ordinary folks out there are going to be paying for this new scheme. We are worried that we're going to have another eHealth problemo, another Ornge problemo, another Presto problemo, another gas plant privatization problemo—you think about it, the Liberals got it.

This new scheme is about to come on board. This new scheme that the government was committed to so bravely in the budget—we now have a new Minister of Transportation saying, cowardly, "Oh no, no, we ain't doing it; we're just thinking about it." But on page 33, it says, "We are committed." So much for the brave new world on this transportation plan that was coming, and what do they have? A toll lane that they're committed to in the budget, but in practise and in reality, they're not doing it; they're thinking about it—for good reasons, be-

cause we're going to have another scandal coming. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I certainly enjoyed, on this side of the House, having the opportunity to listen to the member from Trinity-Spadina provide his, as always, entertaining remarks regarding this year's budget—a budget which, as I said earlier this afternoon, is forward-looking and is going to make sure that our province continues to move in the right direction, as we have over the last nine years and continue to make the improvements.

I know I say this from time to time when I have the privilege of standing up in the House—I've only been on the job here as an MPP for about eight months. But one of the things that struck me just a little bit peculiar about what I heard today from the member from Trinity-Spadina, and what I've heard from that caucus over the last eight months when it comes to public transit and investing in public transit—and I do say this with a tremendous amount of respect for the member from Trinity-Spadina and for that caucus—what struck me over the last eight months is their repeated unwillingness to have a serious conversation, a constructive dialogue about how to make sure that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area continues to wrestle with and solve, or at least certainly alleviate, the significant gridlock issue that we have.

What we get instead, time after time in this House and outside this House, are the bumper sticker politics that appeal to sort of populism, that may make for great sound bites but actually does not move the province forward, does not move this region forward, doesn't get commuters home to their families sooner, doesn't move our economy forward.

The Conference Board of Canada said not that long ago that gridlock in the GTHA costs our province \$6 billion a year in lost economic productivity, and it's a real shame that the members opposite in the third party—who I think otherwise, at least historically, would have had certainly an enlightened view of how to invest in public transit—have taken the easy way out over the last eight months.

Notwithstanding the entertaining performance by the member from Trinity-Spadina, I could not disagree more wholeheartedly with their general approach to the public transit concept.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity-Spadina, a good friend of mine, has made a comment—and we're speaking on Bill 65. He said something that I have to put on the record. He said, "I'm not very good with numbers," and I heard the NDP agree with him. That's my comment. That's why they're agreeing with this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am pleased to respond and build on some of the comments that were made by my colleague the member from Trinity–Spadina. One of the things he mentioned was the fact that there's an issue of spending. Whether it's HOT or HOV lanes, the Minister of Rural Affairs talked about spending—and he seems actually quite proud of it—five, six, seven, eight, depending on whose numbers you want to use, times more on home care than what we proposed, right? We said that it would cost about \$30 million and they came back with anywhere between \$185 million—I heard another number of \$260 million.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's \$260 million on community care.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes, there you go. And they still can't provide a guarantee. That's the problem.

We have a government right now that has a spending problem, and it's something the people in Kenora–Rainy River just can't understand. They can't understand spending \$585 million to move gas plants in southern Ontario, all the while shuttering our travel information centres and slashing hours at our ServiceOntario centres. We have a government of Ontario that is literally withdrawing from parts of my riding. In fact, they're withdrawing not just key services but all services, basic services that the people located in Rainy River, a small community in my riding—I mean, they're told that they have to adhere to provincial laws, but when they look around, there is no evidence of the province of Ontario anywhere to be found. They live in an area where they depend on tourism as a main industry. When people come across the border to get their fishing licence, they used to go to the travel information centres. That's closed. They go to the ServiceOntario centre and that's only open 16 hours a week.

We have to prioritize spending. That's why we need the financial accountability office.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Vaughan and my colleague from Trinity–Spadina.

Let me thoroughly read what page 33 said. It says here, "The province is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy"—so there's a choice—"in which carpooling drivers would continue to drive for free, but other drivers would be able to choose to drive in these lanes for a toll." So read the full sentence before you object.

The other piece here is that there is evidence that the HOV lanes have been successful in other states, as well as in Quebec. Read the book, okay? It's in here.

1720

Ontario is not the first jurisdiction to consider a range of revenue sources for funding for transit infrastructure. For example, the Los Angeles county Metro raises significant funds by issuing debt backed by dedicated revenues, and Montreal as well. So I want to say to the member from Trinity–Spadina, please read the book thoroughly.

As well, the government has also made commitments in terms of infrastructure. The book is very, very clear—the budget book—in terms of investing in public transit as well as infrastructure. The government of Ontario is committed to putting public transit as a high priority of capital investment. That's what it says here, again, on page 33, so if only the member from Trinity–Spadina was actually reading it.

It also talked about the fact that we're investing two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues in public transit across Ontario. This is now permanent funding. Pennies and dimes: It all adds up. When you don't want to read it, you should be reading it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments, and I return to the member for Trinity–Spadina for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the member from Durham, Tories are good with numbers. I understand that very much. That's why they sold the 407 for 100 years for a mere \$1.2 billion. The member from Durham must have counted really well. But I suspect a whole lot of their friends knew how to do the math as well because they pocketed a whole heap of money. Boy, do they know about numbers.

The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, I appreciate your enthusiasm and your excitement about this, but I read the same page to you. You repeated what I read. Yet you understood one thing, and I'm telling you another. Your government said, and your minister said, the province is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicles. What I said to you earlier is, when I asked your minister this question, your minister said they are only studying the matter, to which you say, "Oh, but it's been studied elsewhere and it's working." Well, if you studied the matter already, why didn't your minister say, "We've studied it, and we are doing exactly what we said on page 33, which is, we are committed to converting HOV lanes to HOT lanes." But that's not what your minister said.

I read the same page you did, and you interpret one thing, and I tell you another. That is all you have committed to by way of a GTA transportation plan. That is all you committed in this file, on this page, in this budget. That is it. Even on this small item, you are not committed to it. You're only committed to studying it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to get up and talk about the budget, the budget that has—as was so well said by the Minister of Rural Affairs—been built for Ontarians.

In my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, I've hosted six meet-and-greet sessions in my community—some a few months ago, some more recently. At the more recent ones, I've had the opportunity to talk to folks about the budget and what were they looking for in it and what their reaction is to date.

I think, at the end of the day while you can't make everybody completely happy, what I'm sensing is that

people are looking for balance—balance in the budget. They want us to be fiscally responsible, and they want us to get the deficit down, of course. But they also want us to protect the gains we have made in things like health care, education, social services, and to keep building on things like transportation and infrastructure, and to make sure we're taking care of our environment and our most vulnerable citizens. So I think when you look at the budget, we see something in there on all those fronts.

The other message I'm starting to get, and this has become a stronger message in the last few days, is, when is the budget going to pass? When are we going to get on with the business of implementing all the provisions in the budget? Someone asked if we have costed everything out. I remember speaking to this at last year's budget. The budget is costed out. It was costed out last year and it is costed out this year. However, if we don't pass the budget we do run the risk of not moving forward in a timely way on some enhanced provisions. So we need to get on with it.

Again, in my riding, when I think of both the Scarborough East side of my riding as well as Pickering, there are a couple of big issues all the time. One is transportation and transit—I'm going to come back to that in a minute—and another is the cost of auto insurance. Certainly, when you look at what's in the provisions for the budget on auto insurance, it was an average reduction of 15% over time. I think people are reacting very favourably to that. In fact, I was talking to some constituents this morning about auto insurance when I was out in my riding at the GO trains this morning. They are very, very interested to see us implement that provision in the budget.

In terms of transportation—and it's a pretty unique issue in my riding because my riding straddles Scarborough and Pickering, and the residents of that community go back and forth. Some live in Durham but do a lot of living in Scarborough, and vice versa. So it's not just an issue of good, affordable, reliable transit; it's about how to transit between those two areas, which cover two different major regions and municipalities.

Just looking at our track record, I think it's pretty strong. When I look at the Durham side alone, where my riding is and beyond—it's shared with some other members here in the House—we've invested heavily in transit: \$164.7 million in Durham since 2003, which is fantastic, as well as \$329.1 million in highway infrastructure, because at the end of the day, not everyone takes public transit. Of course, we want as many people to take transit as possible, but that doesn't always happen, and we need to maintain our highway infrastructure. Those are pretty impressive numbers at the Durham regional level.

This past Friday, I was just delighted to be with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure out in Durham to announce a fabulous project called the Durham Rapid Pulse Bus. There are 26 new buses—low-floor vehicles—in this fleet of 26. And guess what? They are going to go from U of T Scarborough across the great

divide into Durham region, all the way east to Durham College. Our government has invested \$87 million in that project. That's \$87 million of the \$164-million transit investment I mentioned. It's fantastic because it's going to help a whole bunch of people transit between Scarborough and Durham and vice versa, but especially the young people, the students, the ones who may live in Durham but are going to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus in my riding, or vice versa—they're in Scarborough and they're going to UOIT or Durham College or Centennial College; that's another campus in my riding. Having those 26 buses going between there, crossing the great divide of Toronto and Durham, is just fantastic news. That's starting very shortly. I was just thrilled to have the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure out for that.

That is definitely the number one issue—transportation—in my riding. I'm glad to see that we're continuing to make investments in transportation and in transit systems. It is important that we get the budget passed so we can get on with more projects like this.

1730

The other thing I want to point out is a very small thing in the budget, Speaker, but it relates to my ministry, the Ministry of Consumer Services, on page 223, where it spells out all the budgetary changes in the different ministries from one year to the next. It's a very small change in the Ministry of Consumer Services, but it's a very important change, Speaker, in that there's a slight increase in the Ministry of Consumer Services this year, and that's not the case in all the other ministries.

In fact, I'm very appreciative that some of the big ministries have helped out to make this small increase happen so that we can move forward with some very strong consumer protection measures. You'll remember that I introduced Bill 55 recently, which is called Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers. That covers things like door-to-door sales of water heaters, debt settlement services and real estate transactions in the province of Ontario. There's some really, really strong consumer protection measures there, Speaker, that will be supported by what's in the budget and all the things that are needed in a government office to make that happen, whether it's the technology, the enforcement mechanisms or compliance mechanisms. So very much what we're talking about under Bill 55 for consumers is indeed tied to the budget, as well as another piece of legislation I introduced recently, which is Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, which is intended to strengthen protection with respect to cellphone agreements.

Again, it's something that constituents of mine, and Ontarians, have been asking for, and I think there's a lot of consensus about the need to get on with that. That includes provisions like capping the charge when you cancel a cellphone agreement. It also provides clarity in cellphone contracts, because, let's face it, cellphone contracts tend to be very legalistic and confusing. There's also provision in there to make sure all the pricing associated with a cellphone is there—what we call all-in

pricing—and there's a provision that if a consumer is owed a refund, they'll have the right to sue the provider to get three times the amount back, which is called triple recovery. That is a very important provision. Finally, there's a piece in the proposed legislation that requires consent by the consumer if a fixed-term contract is amended, renewed or extended, basically ensuring that consumers are well informed.

At the end of the day, Speaker, I think that when we have well-informed consumers, whether we're talking about cellphone contracts, door-to-door—

Miss Monique Taylor: I thought we were talking about the bill.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I am talking about the bill. In the budget on page 223, there are financial provisions to help operationalize these very, very important pieces of consumer protection legislation: door-to-door sales of water heaters, putting stronger measures in place to help protect consumers and make sure they make informed choices, also some provisions around debt settlement companies that will restrict the ability of companies to charge up front for those kinds of services and to provide clear contracts, and some great, great consumer protection items around real estate services in Ontario. I'm just highlighting these things, Speaker, because they are impacted by the budget, and we need to move forward—not just move forward on things in my ministry but all matters of government that are there to protect and serve Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: After the numerous scandals of this government, we in the PC Party have lost confidence in the government, and we urge the House leaders to call our want of confidence motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to respond to some of the comments made by the Minister of Consumer Services. One of the things she said that hit me personally, as the member representing Kenora–Rainy River, is, “Look at our track record. I think it's pretty strong.” She's talking about transit in the Durham area and the need to maintain highway infrastructure. In my speech, I talked about the Kenora highway twinning as an example of a project that has been announced and re-announced and re-re-announced over many, many years and there's been no progress on it. I would say that's one example.

Another example, as I said—and I wanted to build on some comments I made earlier—is the \$585 million to move some gas plants versus shuttering or closing or scaling back the Service Ontario centres where the government is literally withdrawing services from Rainy River. As I mentioned, we have people in Rainy River who are told that they still have to adhere to the laws in Ontario. They still need a driver's licence to drive. They still need a health card to access health services. They still need a fishing license to fish. And the businesses still

need the tourists contributing to the local economy for their businesses to thrive. Every time these poor decisions are made, people lose just a little bit more faith in the system; they lose faith in government in general.

That's the reason why we need the financial accountability officer. We need that accountability officer not just to balance the books, but for democracy. We need to make sure that there is someone looking over the government's shoulder, no matter who the government is, to make sure that the decisions that they're making are in the best interests of all Ontarians, no matter where they live.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just a few comments on the presentation by the Minister of Consumer Services: She spent quite a bit of time on the economic portion of creating jobs and transit and so forth. I think this is very, very important, especially in the particular time that we're going through. We can speak on the health care issues and the education portion we've been championing, but I think the minister is quite correct when she applies so many of the comments towards transportation and creating jobs.

For two or three years now we have on the table \$8.4 billion for the five large projects that we have in Toronto and our money is there. We have committed, as the minister said, \$35 billion to help transportation, to help new infrastructure, to revitalize a lot of the older infrastructure and create new ones as well.

We all know that especially Toronto is choking in heavy traffic and people spend a lot of time back and forth, coming down or going home from the city. I think she's quite right to say that we have to pay attention.

She spoke about buses coming from all over the place, and I know York University is now receiving 1,600 or 1,860 buses daily from all over the place. Now the subway is going through. I hope that by 2015 we can eliminate most of this process, but this is an area that we cannot forget. So the minister is quite right in paying attention to this particular area and building economic strength and eliminating some of the problems that we have in transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: We cannot support a government that is corrupt and going in the wrong direction. They do not deserve to continue to govern. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return to the Minister of Consumer Services for her reply.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to say thank you for the thoughtful comments from the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I hear her. Transportation is what makes us get to work, to school and to friends and families and loved ones, so thank you for your thoughtful remarks.

To the minister responsible for seniors: I think it is good how he made the link between transportation investments and jobs, because it's not just a jobs strategy

itself that's going to create jobs; it is these investments in transportation infrastructure that are going to create jobs.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I don't think you had anything of substance to say, so I don't have anything to respond, unfortunately, on that.

I think what we're seeing, though, is that we do need to get on with it. I'd like to think that all parties agree with the importance of deficit elimination so we can protect what we have in place for Ontarians, whether it's education, health care, social services, the environment—you name it. At the same time, ensuring that we have a fair society, that we are taking care of our most vulnerable citizens, that we are thinking about people on ODSP, that we are thinking about single parents and that we are looking after everyone who is in a vulnerable situation and needs a helping hand—because it could be any of us, of course, at any time. In fact, I think many of us have family and friends who've been in that situation.

1740

Our budget wants to help Ontarians succeed. I think, when we look at the budget, that it is very much a balanced budget, and we definitely need the co-operation of this minority government to move forward so that we can get on with the business of implementing what's in the budget and doing what is best for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me pleasure to be able to stand in the House today to speak on this budget. I'll be speaking on behalf of many of my residents, folks like Marian, Orietta, Ken and Philip—concerned residents who have contacted my office, amongst many, many, many others. They're really concerned about what this budget means to them, and they're hopeful that, as legislators, we'll be able to pass this budget and that it be a budget that means something to folks.

They want us to speak to the issues that they're facing, and I want to take a moment to assure them that New Democrats are listening to them. That's why we've been proposing priorities. Then, secondly, we were proposing accountability measures to make sure that the budget is actually going to be implemented, that things that we've asked for are really going to be there for them. I want to make sure that they are assured that I have been listening, as well as all New Democrats across this province.

They're in direct response to what we've been hearing—our priorities are what we've been hearing from Ontarians across the province. We're not asking for more; we're asking for it to be done right, and we want to ensure that our precious tax dollars are not being wasted any longer. Ontarians have paid for enough fiascos: eHealth, Ornge, gas plants.

My constituents have told me that they want to see guarantees in this budget, that they're tired of more targets and talking points. They've heard promise after promise. They feel that they're let down by this government, and I've heard it over and over again. Ken, a resident in my riding, wrote to me and he was really quite

blunt. He said, "This Liberal government is corrupt and can no longer be trusted with the public purse."

It isn't only Ken who has contacted me in this manner. Philip writes, "I have heard so many promises from this government. But then they waste so many of our tax dollars that I will never trust their word again." These residents need to know that this government will hold their tax dollars in the highest regard.

It's time to put fairness and accountability into this budget. New Democrats will continue to work hard to ensure real results are delivered for the people and families in this province. We have heard time and time again about the need for better health care, home care, jobs and making life more affordable, but it's time to start seeing action. It's time that we see action on things like job creation, improved health care services and measures to save Ontarians in their pocketbook.

Let's talk about jobs, or maybe we should talk about unemployment. Dave, who's another constituent, wrote to me about the difficulties he's having finding a job. Dave's an older gentleman who just graduated from Mohawk College. He went back as an adult student, and he thought that by going back to college, he would be able to find meaningful work at this point in his life. Four years later after graduating, he's still submitting job applications, and there's little in this budget to be able to help him find that job that he's been struggling so hard for and had high hopes to find. It's really disappointing.

Ontario currently has an unemployment rate of 7.7%, but this budget does little to spur job creation. New Democrats took a responsible approach by putting in a First Start program, one that the government has decided to implement, and we're really happy to see that because we definitely have youth who are falling by the wayside. They're coming out of school, and they have high debt and no jobs. So that's a good plan that we're happy to see the Liberal government implement on behalf of New Democrats.

But what about folks like Dave? What are we supposed to tell him? How is he supposed to find re-employment in Ontario? How do we get him back into the workforce? What training and skills development programs are needed? That's a question that happens here. We've got lots of stuff going in for training and skills development, but after that, then what? They still don't have a job.

I went to an event on the weekend; it was a South Asian Heritage Month event. I was approached by not one, not two, but six people who came up to me saying that they were looking for work and how can I help them find a job. This is at one event—at one event, six people approached me and told me they can't find a job, and do I have a job for them? That's not really the direction we should be looking at, that every unemployed person hopes to get a job in their MPP's office because there's no other work out there for them. Do you know how hard it is for me to tell them, "I'm sorry; I can't hire you. You have to continue to look"? We have to continue to try to

help these folks. It's our duty to stand up for thousands of Ontarians who are struggling to find work, and I'm saddened the concerns are not addressed in this budget.

I was pleased to see the government did take on our rule of the \$200 earnings for OW and ODSP recipients. That will definitely help. It's a recommendation from the Frances Lankin-Munir Sheikh report. That's a good implementation, but that's low-hanging fruit. But again, it was one of our priorities, making sure the government was listening.

We still have so many people who are well below the poverty line. Initiatives like this are just going to continue to keep them in poverty. We need to find solutions to get people out of poverty, not cut and slash like the Conservatives want to do and bring everybody down; we need to raise people up in this province. Everybody has the right to a good wage. We definitely have a lot of work ahead of us for this.

We must look at the minimum wage and the rates of people on social assistance. Again, a 1% increase to social assistance isn't more than \$14 a month. That's not so great when the rent increase was 2%.

People will say, "Well, these were your asks." We're not the government. It wasn't our budget to write; it was their budget to write. This is a Liberal budget to write, and we have to give ideas of some sort, but we do not have to write the entire budget. There should have been lots of other ideas in there to bring people out of poverty, with a few ideas from us.

It would have been nice to have a few ideas from the Conservatives, but they've decided to keep their nose out of this process and just say "no, no, no" to the entire thing. It's really actually quite interesting that the Conservatives have decided not to participate in this debate because last week when we were debating co-op housing, they thought it was absolutely vital that each and every single one of their members speak to the co-op housing people here and held up another process of this House. Good people who need housing in this province were being held up by filibustering, yet when we come to something as important as a budget that needs to be discussed for all Ontarians, they refuse to speak on it. That's another rant that I could go on, Mr. Speaker.

There are some really good things in the budget. There are priorities that were put forward by New Democrats: making sure we have a five-day home care guarantee. The government is talking about targets, but there are no guarantees. They've put six times the amount of money into it that we asked for, and there's still not what we asked for—there are no guarantees.

We need accountability measures to take care of these sorts of things. That's why we've called on the Ombudsman. Again, the Ombudsman would help in other cases: when it came to the shortage of chemotherapy drugs and other scandals that have happened in our health care

system. Accountability measures will go a long way with the people in this province, no matter who's in government.

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Lots of things to talk about: a 15% reduction in auto insurance. This is a mandated program. Everybody in this province who drives a car has to have auto insurance. In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, auto insurance went up by 40% in the last year and their intake has gone down. They're getting less and they're expected to pay more, so 15% is barely going to address the increases they've already faced. It is something that will help and I know they're appreciative, but again, accountability—making sure that is in the budget, that that's going to be there with strings attached. Saying they have to do it within a year is absolutely vital, not just mere lip service.

My time has come to an end, Mr. Speaker. Boy, 10 minutes sure does go fast when you're speaking about the budget these days. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I listened intently to the speech from the member from Hamilton Mountain. Although I have to point out I don't know if I agree 100% with all her characterizations of the budget, I do appreciate the fact that she identified some strengths in the budget and some areas of common concern between the government and the New Democratic Party.

As we approach this budget, we look to both parties and we indeed look to the people across the province to find what are their areas of priority. Certainly, with the New Democratic Party we did identify areas of common ground and we were able to come forward with proposals—not exactly as they had been proposed by the NDP, but ones which I think reflected the concerns they have. I believe all parties in this House are concerned about issues around home care and our seniors, around issues of auto insurance that she spoke about, issues certainly about youth unemployment.

The one area I would want to spend a little bit of time on—I realize I'm limited to two minutes—is the whole issue of poverty. I do want to expand, I think, a little bit more on what she said. She said that we missed some opportunities in the budget. I would commend her to review all that's in there. She mentioned the \$200 when it comes to individuals on social assistance who want to work not experiencing a clawback. I would also talk about the 1% increase overall, but a targeted increase for those in Ontario Works, who will be receiving an extra \$20 a month, which is in line with the spirit of what Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh spoke about when they talked about increasing that bottom level for someone on Ontario Works. Within that, there's a whole new approach. We foreshadow a lot of transformation in the system, one that's aimed at better supporting people on

social assistance, particularly as they move into the workforce—so a lot of foreshadowing of some future moves in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: People in my riding have told me time and time again that this government can't be trusted. They've got us into a mess, and we can't support this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to say, I think the member from Hamilton Mountain has rightly pointed out that on the poverty portfolio—unfortunately, we have a portfolio on poverty in the province of Ontario. The reduction strategy that has been proposed by the Liberals has actually failed on several accounts. I could go through each and every one of those, but I think that you also have to be very considerate of the fact that the Frances Lankin-Sheikh report is not perfect. This is something also that we're going to have to find some consensus on going forward, because one of the main criticisms of that report has been that there would be no distinction between disability support recipients and general welfare recipients.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has said that this report is not perfect. It needs some work. We have some concerns about it. Just to send it out there into the universe saying that this is going to be the answer—I mean, it's just not. I think the member from Hamilton Mountain has actually rightly put—she's hearing from the real, lived experience of people who live in poverty, and that should actually be informing a strategy going forward.

One of the big things that we're missed out is generating revenue to actually fund progressive programs, and one of those key factors has to do with corporate taxes and a fair taxation model. We've called for a reduction—not a reduction, but a closing of that corporate tax loophole. If the people in this province are hurting, why are corporations getting a break on HST for food and entertainment? I mean, where are the priorities here in this House?

This discourse on poverty is going to go back and forth. I've been reading the white papers of the PC Party, and, quite honestly, I'm very concerned about some of those discussions and some of those ideas, and for good reason. Actually, the rest of the province is equally concerned, because that has been worked out in the whole election conversation too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm glad to rise again to speak to the budget and respond to the comments from the member from Hamilton Mountain. I know she's passionate about some things that are very important to

her and to all of us, whether it's poverty reduction or children and youth in our province. We, on the government side, share in her passion on those things. We also share in our passion to make sure we can continue to pay for those things and pay for what's committed, not just in this budget but beyond.

As I've said before, my own view is that the biggest threat to those programs, whether it's health care, social services, investments in the environment, whichever—the biggest threat to that is our deficit. That is why we are very committed to reducing the deficit by 2017-18.

Our projection is better than ever. We have marked the fourth year in a row that the province has reported a deficit lower than what we originally projected. This is key; this is very key to job creation. It's key to protecting those services that I think we all agree are very important. We need to continue beating those fiscal targets so that we can continue to invest in things that matter most to the people of Ontario. At the end, it's about the balance, the balance between protecting those gains and reducing the deficit by 2017-18, and the net-to-debt GDP ratio to the pre-recession level of 27%.

I don't think there's a lot of disagreement with what the member from Hamilton Mountain is saying. However, I just want to make sure we can continue to afford those programs that I think are very important to all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I can return now to the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I really wish that I would have been able to be allotted one of the 20-minute slots for this budget, because there is so much more to talk about.

To the government House leader: You're talking about our proposals and our good ideas—no, no, no, hold on. I don't have a lot of time, so I'll flip to this one really quickly. You're talking about Ontario Works and social services, and that I didn't read it. I did read it. But if you add up what has actually been given, compared to what's been taken away with our CSUMB and our start-up allowance, there's no comparison. We're going to have more people falling into poverty every single day.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo had it absolutely correct about closing the corporate tax loopholes. We'd rather give money to big corporations to wine and dine their friends than take care of our people in poverty in this province.

The Minister of Consumer Services talks about my passion, and how do we pay for it all. Well, let me tell you: When we have the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation talking today, about how wonderful it is that the province of Ontario spends less money on services than any other province, we obviously have a problem going on.

This is our money here; it is the taxpayers' money. That money is for services. Those services are what people count on in this province, whether it's for their health care, whether it's for child protection. No matter what it is, that's what that money is put here to do. It's not to be given to entertainment; it's not to be given to corporations. It is to be put into the services that people count on to survive in this province.

So when you say I have passion, you're absolutely right. My residents sent me here to stand up, to be passionate in this House, and that's exactly what I'll do every time I get the opportunity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	

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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
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Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Women's Institutes

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Mr. Paul Miller..... 1990

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Ms. Dipika Damerla..... 1990

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Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette..... 1990

Jewish Heritage Month

Mr. Steven Del Duca..... 1991

Services for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Sylvia Jones..... 1991

Notice of dissatisfaction

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John Turner

Hon. John Milloy..... 1991

Mr. Michael Prue..... 1991

Hon. Jeff Leal..... 1992

Ms. Laurie Scott..... 1993

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)..... 1994

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Prompt Payment Act, 2013, Bill 69, Mr. Del Duca / Loi de 2013 sur les paiements rapides, projet de loi 69, M. Del Duca

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 May 2013

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des débats
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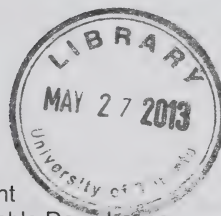
Mardi 14 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to speak to the budget today, although I do it with a heavy heart. As you know, an incredible thing happened last night in Boston. Being a Leafs fan for so many years, back to the days of Johnny Bower, I can never recall such a sad, sad night. But anyway, Leafs fans are loyal and we'll carry on.

Interjection: They made it to game seven.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes. Anyway, it's not easy.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know it's funny to people outside of Toronto, but Leafs fans have suffered long and the young lads played well last night.

I'm here to speak to the budget, and I just want to go through a number of things. First of all, the one thing I am happy that is in the budget is the \$35 billion over three years for infrastructure. That means that men and women across the province will work on building bridges, roads, sewers, public transit. They'll build hospitals and schools. That is critically important, because I think we don't spend enough time recognizing the importance of construction and the people who work in construction, whether they be small renovators or whether they be big construction companies.

One of the backbones of Ontario's economy is people who work in building. In this province, we're blessed with so many talented people who are wonderful at building our incredible tall buildings, building our sewers, building our roads. They are very expert, and we're

blessed to have them. This investment by the provincial government ensures that people work and ensures that we have good roads, schools and hospitals, which is critically important.

My own riding of Eglinton—Lawrence—right next door, in the riding of York South—Weston, on the border, we're building a new hospital, Humber River Regional Hospital. It's going to be the first digital hospital in North America. It's well under construction, and a lot of men and women are working there. It's not only the construction trades; all kinds of talented people are working on all the design aspects of this project. I visited the hospital site, and it's an amazing work in progress.

Also, along Eglinton we've finally started work on building the underground Eglinton crosstown transitway. Again, the work is under way. The tunnel boring machine is about to do its boring at Keele Street. We've waited for that since 1995, when unfortunately, the subway that was already three years under construction was stopped and filled in. We waited, because we need that transit in the middle of the city, and we're back at it. The only trouble now is the cost of that, compared to what it would have been. We would have gone to the airport for about \$800 million; now we're looking at about \$5 billion. Anyway, the fact is they are building it again. It's going to be urban renewal—jobs. People are already building new homes and apartments. Good things are happening as a result of the transit.

Also, I'd like to mention the youth investment. We have young people who want to work, want an opportunity, and we're investing in a youth job fund—about \$300 million in young people. That is critical, because these people want a chance and want to contribute. This investment in young people is also a very important investment.

A lot of our seniors are very anxious to get more home care. In this budget, there's going to be home care for 46,000 more Ontarians. As I mentioned, building hospitals is critically important; bricks and mortar are important. But as we transform our health care system, we have to provide more services at home. That's where people stay healthier, and that's where they want to be. They don't want to go to a hospital. The investment in keeping people healthy at home is critically important and something that really helps deliver quality home health care. That is a critical investment.

I also want to make sure that we look, in this budget, at auto insurance. There's a serious section in the budget on trying to deal with our auto insurance challenges, and there's a commitment to reduce rates by 15%. Many of

us here are certainly familiar with some of the challenges in auto insurance. The main thing about auto insurance is that it is mandatory in Ontario, so you have to have it. This investment in ensuring that auto insurance is available at a reasonable price is critically important, because so many of us depend on cars. This is a critical issue that we've tackled.

Just to mention, one of the things about auto insurance that we've got to keep in mind is that it's not just about reducing rates. We have to make sure people have protection when they are in accidents—that they can get their car fixed and get the medical support they need—and also eliminate the gaming that is going on.

There are too many people—not too many people, but a certain aggressive minority of people who are gaming the system, anything from staged accidents—in committee we've heard so many examples. It was just shocking, the testimony we heard before general government. They said that this kind of gaming has essentially been going on in auto insurance in Ontario for 40 years. It's systemic, and it's costing not just the insurance companies—everybody says, “You can game the system and the insurance company pays.” No, we all pay. These gamers, these fraud artists, are taking advantage of a system, on a daily basis, that's meant to protect people and costing all of us higher premiums.

That's why this anti-fraud task force is critically important. We can't let this small minority abuse the system and make everybody else pay. It's a good system, but the fraud artists are too prevalent. Sadly enough, they're abusing the system for their own advantage and their own profit at the expense of everybody else. So I'm glad to see that the government has made a commitment to take upon itself the implementation of the anti-fraud task force, which is critically important.

0910

I just want to mention that another thing that doesn't get much attention in the budget is the uploading that has been taking place. That means that in past years, there were costs that were driven down onto the backs of the property taxpayers. Those were the costs of maintaining highways and maintaining services at the municipal level. But over the last 10 years, billions of dollars have been brought onto the provincial tax roll and off the municipal tax roll, meaning that property taxes in Ontario have stabilized, because those costs—in many cases they're social soft costs—have been uploaded by the billions of dollars onto property taxes.

That is of great benefit to the municipalities, but it's really of benefit to homeowners. Whether you rent or whether you own a home or you have a mortgage, keeping property taxes under control is critical. So over the last number of years we have systematically brought these costs back to the provincial government—of great benefit to every municipality, large or small, from Kenora to Cornwall. That uploading is critical.

I know that in Toronto itself, we've uploaded billions of dollars off the city of Toronto's property taxes back onto the provincial tax, which is of great benefit to

Toronto, so they can do what they have to do for their citizens.

I just want to mention briefly—oh, God, it's overtime. Anyway, it's a budget that helps working people. It helps stabilize our economy and it helps build for the future. That's what this is critically important for: building for the future, so we have a good workforce and a competitive and a caring society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Eglinton—Lawrence did say one thing about the discussion about municipal property taxes, and I just want to make this statement: Yes, they are uploading stuff, but they're also uploading the OMPF, the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, so the municipalities have no net gain on it.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's not true. That's blatantly false.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's absolutely true. They are clawing back the OMPF funding, and—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I think I've made my point. I touched a sore point, so I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this important bill. As the debate plays itself out—and it should be coming to a close fairly soon—I think it has been very clear that we as the third party have been able to hold the government to account on several key issues, namely home care, auto insurance, youth employment. Certainly, the conversation around closing those corporate tax loopholes and generating revenue to pay for the plans that are contained within the budget—certainly we need to get some clarity on that issue as well.

I think there is a good case for the financial accountability office which our leader, Andrea Horwath, has put forward. From an accountability perspective, that's what the people of this province actually expect, because we also have to acknowledge that there is a serious trust issue with this government.

The people of the province and the people of my riding have been very clear in communicating to me about the priorities that are expressed in this budget. We've seen promises, we've seen plans, we've seen strategies, but we need accountability. I think that what we have tried to do on this side of the House, notwithstanding what the PCs have tried to do—which is nothing—is try to hold the government to account, to ensure that the Ombudsman actually also has oversight over the health care sector so that we don't have another Ornge, so that

we don't have another eHealth, so that the chemotherapy drugs scandal, which has just recently played itself out, doesn't happen again.

These are two accountability measures: the financial accountability office and the Ombudsman. These are long-standing asks that the people of this province actually deserve. If we put this into play, we will have an opportunity to rebuild trust back in this Legislature. I think that's a long time coming and I think that it's possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to provide a few comments to the input my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence has given on the government's budget for 2013. My good friend has mentioned that in the budget there are initiatives to provide more opportunities for youths to access employment and training. I can tell you, from the riding that I represent, that would make a significant difference to the young people in my riding who need these opportunities.

Also, I think every member of this Legislature has heard over the years that people who are recuperating from some form of surgery or illness in their homes require additional home care, and this budget clearly provides that opportunity. There are people out there who are actually waiting for the implementation of this particular initiative by the government.

But I think one of the bigger ones that is in the budget, and we should all be supporting it, is the auto insurance initiative. Many of you will remember in 2004, the government of the day actually took a huge initiative to reduce insurance by 10%. In 2010, the government again initiated some changes in the whole auto insurance industry. As a result of those changes we are starting to see some activity out there that is causing the insurance rates to go down. So in 2013, we're taking that next step, and it is in this budget to move there.

I'm going to tell you, one of the steps that I hope we can get in place quickly is the auto fraud. The area that I live in and the area that I represent is paying high rates because of significant fraud. I need those initiatives to be in place quickly so we can benefit from them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: We are debating budget Bill 65 here this morning, a bill that actually spends \$3.6 billion more than the revenue we take in.

The member opposite just talked about auto insurance initiatives. We do sit on committee together. I think he knows, after hearing all the testimony that we heard regarding the auto insurance industry, that what they have in the budget is going to be very, very difficult to achieve. So if they believe that they're going to be able to get auto insurance customers a 15% break on their auto insurance premiums—there's a lot of smoke and mirrors contained in this budget, as well.

He also addressed youth unemployment, which is at 16.5% in Ontario. It's an unbelievable number, and this

budget doesn't go nearly far enough to address that situation with our young people under the age of 25.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, so we now return to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the members from Durham, London–Fanshawe, Scarborough–Rouge River and Prince Edward–Hastings for their comments.

I think that what people in our ridings want is government to help when they need it. They don't ask very often. If they get sick, they want good health care. If young people are out of work, they want government to give them a bit of a hand. They want good, safe streets. They want a good place to live and grow up for their kids.

I know in this Legislature we spend so much time being critical—and that's the job of the opposition, and even some of us in government, to be critical, but we forget that this is an amazing province with so many incredible, hard-working people. Despite the high Canadian dollar, despite the price of oil, despite the recession, the people of Ontario have really stood up and overcome all this adversity because the people of Ontario are not afraid to work. They're not afraid to invest. They're not afraid to innovate. They're not afraid to take on challenges. They've done amazingly well. When everybody said, "Well, Ontario isn't going to make it"—we heard about all the talking heads on television saying, "Oh, Ontario this and Ontario"—hey, Ontario has shown that we can do it.

0920

We've got incredible people. We've got incredible resources. Our agricultural resources, our natural resources and our human resources are second to none. That's what I hope this budget can reinforce: joining with those incredible people of Ontario, giving them the opportunity to continue to defy all the negative pundits that keep putting us down. You can't put us down, because we are strong, and we will overcome. We've shown that over and over again, and we'll show them again that Ontario is strong and going to get stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 65 on behalf of the NDP caucus but, more importantly, on behalf of the residents, the taxpayers, in my Welland riding.

When I was first elected, in 2011, that election resulted in a minority government. The expectation of the people across this province was that we have a minority government, we have three parties, and they purposely did that so that these parties would have to work together on behalf of them. The message was clear then, and it's still clear, that those people who elected us want results. They're sick of the cynical political games, and they want to see action and results from this government.

Andrea Horwath, our leader, has been committed to getting results for Ontarians. We've been out over the last few months speaking to Ontarians across this province. We're now here in a budget situation, and we have

had an opportunity to actually put forward some proposals that will achieve some results for the people who live in this province. We're ready and willing to add our ideas to that budget.

I think we owe the people of this province, in this minority government, to get some action and to get something results. Unfortunately, the people on my far right, the leader of the official opposition and the Conservative Party, don't feel the same way as we do about getting results for the people in this province. They have refused to listen to Ontarians, they've refused to put aside some political games, and they vowed to vote against the budget before even reading it. I don't think that is a responsible way to represent your constituents and the people in this province.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I agree. Absolutely.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Right? We also were kind of tied up in prorogation, because the Liberals actually chose to prorogue this government last fall while we had already introduced and debated—I don't know—110 or 120 bills. That was all for political gain, to elect a new leader and to see if they could get some improvement in the polling results.

They scrapped a lot of bills, and today we are here debating those bills again so that they can use them as announcements, as if they were actually new bills, in the event that there is an upcoming election.

In fact, they even co-opted some of our bills as their own. Our tanning bill and our sprinkler bill are now Liberal bills.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But we're getting results. It doesn't matter. It's getting it done.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. Anyway, it is a shame. Dalton McGuinty actually could have preserved all these bills, and we could have been much farther along. We probably could have been at Bill 250 by now.

But anyway, it's our job, it's our responsibility, to take our job seriously, to understand who we're here to represent, and that it's the lives of our constituents that we're talking about here.

The Liberals have introduced a new budget. We have put forward a lot of good ideas. We asked for a youth jobs plan, a Youth Jobs Strategy. There's some money going to that. It will address some of the youth employment issues in this province and, hopefully, kids will be able to move out of their parents' basements and actually get on with their lives.

We also asked the government to remove the barriers, the clawbacks, for people on ODSP and OW, and that actually was in the budget. Now, that is one small step of a much larger strategy that needs to be implemented and developed to move people out of poverty. You know, \$200 a month is not a whole lot of money. I don't know about you, but my family can spend that at the grocery store in one week. So we're not talking about giving people a whole lot of money here.

We asked for an increase in home care and a guarantee that nobody would wait more than five days to actually

get home care once they qualified. Unfortunately, the government isn't prepared to make that guarantee. I don't know why that is, because certainly they've done those kinds of things with wait times, where they've given hospitals additional dollars if they were able to meet the wait times around hip replacements, knee replacements and cataract surgeries. Surely they should be able to give a guarantee to people desperately waiting for home care—a list, I think, of about 6,100 or 6,200.

I can tell you that home care today, as it sits, is not the most satisfactory system. I can give you an example in my own riding, where my neighbour actually called for some physio. She was very fragile. She wasn't able to get from her walker to a chair or from her walker to the bed without help. She got one physio assessment, and then she got a list of exercises to complete by herself. Then she got one assessment two weeks later to say, "Oh, you're doing well." I don't actually call that home care; I don't call it a service. She would have been better off not to have it at all.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's the bare minimum.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, it's the bare minimum.

In order to make sure we were able to fund some of these initiatives, we also came forward with proposals to do things, as we did in the last budget, to cap public sector CEO salaries. We believe that would have generated about \$0.7 billion. We also asked for the loophole to be closed on HST input tax credits. That is actually a loophole that will see big corporations, which can well afford to take their clients to a Blue Jays game or out for an expensive dinner at a steak house—

Ms. Catherine Fife: No more Leafs.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, no more Leafs games, unfortunately.

The average taxpayer doesn't get to write off those expenses. They're the ones paying the freight here. The big corporations are already getting a quite satisfactory tax rate, unlike the taxpayers of this province. So we said, "Close those loopholes, and you'll save \$1.3 billion." To date, the only thing the government has done is send a letter, on May 1, months after we first proposed it.

So I'm actually—time goes very quickly when you're up here. We also proposed a number of other things, but I'm going to concentrate now on the last two things we addressed last week.

The financial accountability office: The reason that is important is because we have asked for a balanced and accountable budget process. We've been talking about this for several months. We've been talking about scandals at gas plants, where millions, which could be leading to billions, of dollars have been wasted. We talked last year, and we're still talking, about the Ornge air ambulance fiasco, where millions and potentially billions of dollars have also been wasted. Prior to that, it was eHealth, and I'm sure there are many more to come. What we're saying is that if we had a financial accountability office, we could in fact be dealing with these things at the front end instead of at the back end. That, in itself, would save taxpayers millions and millions of dollars.

We're also asking for Ombudsman oversight, which is not a stretch. I mean, a \$48-billion, \$49-billion health care budget; it's, I don't know, 40%, 50% of the budget—maybe even more—60%.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hospitals are about \$24 billion or \$25 billion.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Right. It's a lot of money. We can't understand why the government wouldn't want to have Ombudsman oversight. We are the only province in Canada that doesn't have it. In fact, there is Ombudsman oversight of the LHINs. So it's not a stretch to actually expand that to hospitals, home care, clinics—there are so many different clinics now. There are the family health teams, there are the CHCs and then there are all these other things the government funds, like the private eye clinics—it goes on and on. We need to be clear that there is some oversight.

0930

Hundreds of patients complain every year. We know that because they complain to the College of Nurses, for example, about their care. They may complain about their care providers or they may complain to some other college that represents professionals in the health care system, but they also complain directly to the Ombudsman. So, certainly, it's our position that we need to have that financial accountability office to save the taxpayers a lot of money, and we need to have Ombudsman oversight so that patients in this province have a venue to go to to get their issues addressed.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to this. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm happy to rise again to speak about the Ontario path to balance the 2013 budget.

I want to respond to a couple of comments that the member from Welland made. She made a comment about the Liberal government co-opting some of their private members' bills. I do think it's important to set the record straight. I mean, if we want to talk about who brought forward what, there are many examples that the Liberals brought forward that I think she is alluding to and suggesting were co-opted. We can talk about the sprinklers in seniors' homes bill that was brought forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing some time ago. And the tanning bed one; that was originally brought forward by a former member from the government side. But the important thing is that most Ontarians are not that focused on who brought forward what bill. Locally, it's important who brings it forward; it resonates in certain communities, of course. But when we get in the Legislature, at the end of the day it's about bringing forward the best ideas that will serve Ontarians as a whole. I think that's the spirit that people expect us to work with, and the intent: to do what's best, take the good ideas of all the bills that are before us and call them forward and get them to committee so we can refine them and work on them and make them better for the benefit of

Ontarians, and be less focused on who brought forward what.

The member also talked about financial accountability. When we look at the budget, there's certainly a number of very strong measures around fiscal responsibility and an accountable government. There's quite a list. I won't have time in my two-minute response to cover them all, but there are many things related to managing program spending, to continuing with recommendations from Drummond, managing compensation costs, slowing the growth rate of health care while still delivering core services—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully and attentively to the member from Welland and I think she was directly on course when she was talking about the state of where we are. She mentioned, I think quite informatively, about the gas plant scandal; she mentioned about the Ornge scandal; she mentioned about the eHealth scandal. And she kind of wound up by talking about the Liberals plagiarizing bills. In that respect, I think they're right.

But I ask them one question, rhetorically: How can you possibly be supporting this government on this bill? This is the question. In your response I expect you to explain, why are you supporting the Liberals who you think so poorly of?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate the member from Welland. She covered a lot of ground.

I appreciate the Tories responding to the member from Welland in the way that they do. I know that the leader of the Conservative Party is in a hurry to either be the Premier or to skedaddle away from here. I understand the urgency of that Conservative imperative.

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Durham?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd ask the member to direct his comments to the budget bill, Bill 65.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Trinity-Spadina has the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was a wonderful interruption, of course.

So I really do appreciate what the Conservatives are all up to. They are all in a hurry to get out of here; I understand that. But we have a job to do and we're doing it as best we can. One of the deficits we have in this place, in this Legislature—and in the federal government—is a deficit of accountability. The point is, how do we make ourselves accountable to the citizens of Ontario?

We propose a couple of things: One is a financial accountability office similar to—à la Page at the federal level that held the Tories to account each and every day while he was there, God bless. He did one heck of a job. We're looking to do the same here in Ontario because I think we need it. Secondly, we're calling for Ombuds-

man oversight over our hospitals and long-term-care facilities. We believe we need that accountability. Now, the Minister of the Environment says we've got the auditor. No, they're two different functions. One does audit for money and the other one hears appeals from people and says, "Here's the problem I've got." Then he researches that, investigates and makes recommendations to make government better. That's what we want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I thank you, Speaker. Just a couple of comments. I appreciate the remarks by the member from Welland on the presentation today.

I just want to spend my two minutes on three or four particular aspects that are within the budget. One is, of course, the 15% which our colleagues on the other side, the NDP, have brought forward, I have to say, very vigorously. I think at some point in time I know that we all wanted to do something very, very major, so I think this is important to see that it's in the budget.

The other thing is home care and the changes that we are making. The hard-working Minister of Health here is making changes to the health care system. It's about time that we do bring some changes, and they are very major and positive changes as well.

The other one is jobs for youth. I think we have heard this morning here how frustrating it is to see our young people still unemployed, if you will. We have a good percentage that is looking for work, and \$295 million is to create some 30,000 jobs for youth. I think this must be taken into consideration.

The other thing that I really want to speak on, because we hear so much about infrastructure, Metrolinx and transportation—now is the time. It is within the budget: \$35 billion over two years; we are looking at 100,000 jobs a year. This is not only for Metrolinx Toronto; we are helping some 97 municipalities throughout Ontario with respect to remodeling infrastructure within those municipalities. I think we have to take that into consideration. I thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the Minister of Consumer Affairs, the member from Durham, the member from Trinity-Spadina and the minister for seniors.

It's interesting—actually, the member from Trinity-Spadina raised it—that our friends here to the right aren't debating this bill, because certainly in the last session they were ringing bells, delaying debates, and now they're wanting to speed this debate along. I guess so they can get on with summer or something, I don't know—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Cottage time.

Ms. Cindy Forster:—cottage time, whatever that is. But you know what? Our proposals are about accountability. This government has not been accountable in many ways—millions and millions of dollars wasted over the last couple of years. So this is really just about making the government accountable. It's about making the

government keep their promises. I can remember there being advertisements back in 2011 about the 100 or so broken promises of the Liberal government in the 2007-11 period. So accountability, I think, needs to be part of this budget.

The Ombudsman piece—once again, this is a huge budget—a large part of this government spending. I see no reason why the government would not want accountability. People want to make sure that every one of those valued tax dollars is spent in a way that provides excellent services for the people who live in this province.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They must be afraid.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You know, that may be the case, but in fact there's no reason not to have Ombudsman oversight. As I said, it's already at the LHIN level. The LHINs are the people in the 14 regions who are out there passing budgets in each one of those regions. If they have oversight, why shouldn't the rest of the health care system?

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to begin by speaking out to Leafs Nation across the province, who I know are in a bit of despair today. I suggest, be not despaired. Our boys did us very, very proud last night and they did us very proud in this playoff battle with the Bruins. When you think about it, this is the youngest team in professional hockey today. What great experience they had over the course of seven games. They got to overtime in that seventh game. Yes, they didn't get the overtime goal to go on, but our boys did us proud. Leafs Nation ought to be proud of each and every one of those players. I'll tell you, I certainly am as well.

On to the budget, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by presenting seven reasons—there are many others—why I think we ought to be supporting the budget. I'll go through them quickly and then I'll try, in the time I have, to go into a little more detail on each and every one of them. I probably won't get to them all.

The first is, let's face it, we ought to be supporting this budget to avoid what I would consider to be an unnecessary election that I don't think any Ontarian really wants. Number two, if you believe in fiscal responsibility, you ought to be supporting this budget. Number three, if you believe in creating jobs and opportunities for our young people, you ought to be supporting this budget. If you believe in a strong economy, you ought to be supporting this budget. If you believe in affordable auto insurance rates, you ought to be supporting this budget. If you believe in the importance of caring for seniors in their homes, then you ought to be supporting this budget. If you're concerned about the vulnerable, then you ought to be supporting this budget. The point I'm making is, whether you swing a little to the left or a little to the right, you ought to be supporting this budget, because this is a budget that is supported by the majority of Ontarians.

Let me begin with the fiscal responsibility piece. We're the only government now in all of Canada that for four consecutive years has met our budget targets. We're well on target to meet our deficit reduction targets and have the deficit slayed by 2017-18—a reasonable, doable but an aggressive target to meet. I'm confident our track record demonstrates that we'll be able to get there.

If you believe, as I said, in creating jobs and opportunities for young people, then our Youth Jobs Strategy does just that. It's a \$295-million, almost \$300-million investment in our young people. The centrepiece of that strategy is a Youth Employment Fund—about \$195 million of that investment goes there. What that strategy does is it works in partnership with the private sector to create job opportunities for our young people. The fact is, our young people need that foot in the door to get that job experience that they need. It's the old adage: You can't get a job without experience, but you can't get experience without a job. A lot of our young people are facing that dilemma.

This program is very important to our young people, and it's very important that we get this budget passed, because we want to have that program up and running, if possible—a very aggressive timeline—by the fall. We can do it, Mr. Speaker, but we're going to have to get that budget passed by the spring in order to allow us to be able to meet that timetable and start helping our young people get that first crack at a job by the fall.

The second piece of that Youth Jobs Strategy that I find very exciting is the Youth Entrepreneurship Fund. I think that's incredibly exciting, because we need to build a culture of entrepreneurship in this province. It's something that some would say isn't naturally a part of Ontario or Canadian culture, but it's something that needs to be built in. It's not just for our young people to go out and start up businesses. That's important; that's terrific. That helps create jobs, rather than just going out and getting a job yourself, but it's also to build that entrepreneurial mindset.

Companies around the world are looking for workforces that have people who have that entrepreneurial mindset to be able to do that. This program will provide mentorship, which is critically important; seed-stage capital, which is also important; and it will provide opportunities to provide outreach in high schools, which will help breed that culture of entrepreneurial thinking that I think that next-generation workforce is going to need to be globally competitive.

The other piece of the strategy that also excites me is the Youth Innovation Fund. Mr. Speaker, there is no greater success story in Ontario than in many of our campus accelerator centres that are located right across the province. There's the U of T accelerator centre that's near here; there's also the DMZ, the digital media zone that Ryerson set up. When you go down to Silicon Valley, what they're telling us down there is that Ontario is now producing the best entrepreneurs in the world, and many of them are bubbling up through these centres. VeloCity in Waterloo is another great example of that.

It's something we can be proud of and something we can build on, and that's why I'm so excited about the Youth Innovation Fund.

The fourth piece of the strategy is the business connectivity and training fund. That's important because it brings everyone together to tackle the issue of training.

So I think the centrepiece of this budget, and one of the reasons why all parties ought to be supporting it, is the \$300-million investment that we're making in job opportunities for our young people. It's critically important in building that economy of the future.

Mr. Speaker, if you believe in a strong economy—and I say this to people who might be on the centre to right area of the political spectrum across the province—the single most important ask of the Jobs and Prosperity Council, which represented our business community very, very well, was to move forward with the extension of the capital cost allowance for manufacturing. That was their single greatest ask. That's in this budget. That's a \$295-million savings to our manufacturing sector for investing in processing machinery and equipment over three years—very significant in trying to tackle the productivity gap between Ontario's business community and the US. That's another reason to support the budget.

One of the major asks of small business and the CFIB was to provide them with a greater exemption with regard to the employer health tax levy and relief for small business. We're moving that exemption rate from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for payroll. That's going to benefit thousands of small businesses. I think it's 60,000 small businesses that are going to benefit significantly from that. That's going to help create jobs across our economy.

I'm also really pleased with the \$45-million grant for the music industry. That makes good business sense, because when music is made here, the residuals of those artists flow into our economy instead of somewhere else. That's not just when Canadians make music here; that's when anybody makes music here. That grant is a good investment because, ultimately, if there's a good business case, that will pay for itself. It's good for our music industry, which is terrific, but it's also really good for our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the \$35-billion investment in infrastructure: I think there's something like 100,000 jobs that are attached to that, at least. These are tough fiscal times. The fact that this government continues to invest in our roads, bridges, transit, hospitals and schools across this province is really important, because that's helping to ensure that we continue to build a strong economy.

I also mentioned auto insurance rates. If you believe in more affordable auto insurance rates, then you ought to be supporting this budget, because this budget will lead to a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates. When you look at the track record of this government with auto insurance rates—this is something that's good to get on the record—and you compare it with the nine years before, from 1995 to 2003, inflation was at around 18%, and auto insurance rates shot up 45% in that time. If you look at the time we've been in office, from 2003 to 2012, in-

flation was about the same, around 18.1%. Auto insurance rates went up 11.4% during that time, less than the cost of inflation. That tells me we've been managing this file reasonably well. But in recent years, we've seen a very high increase in fraud and things like that that is jacking up auto insurance rates, so we need to take action once again. This will be the third time that we've intervened and taken action, and I'm very confident that we'll be able to meet our objective of 15% auto insurance rates.

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In the 30 seconds or less I have left, I didn't get to touch on the investments we're making in home care—a \$700-million investment. That's going to touch the lives of 46,000 Ontarians to help them stay in their homes longer and to stay there safer. That's important to our families—also the investments we're making for the vulnerable: the increases in social assistance and the adjustments we're making to that.

There's something in this budget for all Ontarians. It's a balanced budget that leads us to fiscal balance. It's good for the economy. It's good for the vulnerable. All members of the Legislature ought to be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Scarborough Centre, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, started off by outlining the seven reasons to support it. I call it the "seven deadly sins." Basically, obesity would be one of them.

The seven issues that I like to focus on—they've doubled the debt from \$139 billion to \$273 billion. Beware. They've doubled the deficit, really. In longer terms, when they started, it was \$5 billion; it's now going to be \$11 billion. So they've doubled pretty well everything but have delivered nothing. In fact, if you really look at the scandals that we've had to deal with in Ontario: the gas plant, the billions wasted there; Ornge, the billions wasted there; eHealth—those are the seven things people should keep in mind.

I can't think for a moment why the NDP is still going to support them. They're in bed together on this, and I can't wait for the member from Trinity-Spadina.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know that the Tories are eager to get out of here. I am afraid that some of them are saying they want an election so they could get rid of their leader. I don't know. I'm worried about that, but I could be wrong. I want to be wrong, of course.

I have a question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, because he talked about the payroll tax. The NDP made a proposal, as you know, that we keep the payroll tax exemption at \$400,000 for small businesses and that we eliminate that payroll exemption for those corporations that earn \$5 million and up, which you have done. God bless.

You did one thing, but then you did something else, and that is, you raised the exemption from \$400,000 for

small businesses to \$450,000, thus making the whole package revenue-neutral. My question to you is: Did you not think that that tax exemption of \$400,000 for small businesses was enough, and why increase it to \$450,000, taking away from governments the ability to have a few dollars extra? God knows you need the revenue, because your deficit—it's not that small; it's quite huge. So I'm asking you why you wouldn't take the opportunity to raise a little revenue, because the exemption for small businesses of \$400,000 seemed and seems reasonable, but you opted to increase it as a way of losing potential revenue that you desperately need.

The exemption helps small business people. I understand that. But did you need to increase it and thus get rid of all the potential revenue that you so desperately need? Perhaps you might answer that question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to join in on the debate and make a few comments about my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and some of the comments from the member from Durham and the member from Trinity-Spadina.

It's kind of interesting sitting here, but I remember being a city councillor when the then government of the day filled in the Eglinton subway that all of us in Toronto wanted. We don't seem to want to remember that and remember the costs that occurred then by my friends on the other side.

I remember, in early 2000, the blackouts in Toronto, when my fridge went down for four days and everything in it I had to throw in the garbage. That was as a result of my friends across the other way would not deal with the power shortage that Ontario had at the time.

Interjections.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Now you're hearing the noise on the other side because the truth is coming home to roost.

Madam Speaker, I'm part of a government that resolved that power shortage by building 17 power plants in the short period that we've been in office. Yes, there have been two of them that have caused a problem, and we accept that. But nobody's perfect. You're not perfect; we're not. But we built 15 power plants in Ontario that are up and running and working, and we should be very proud of that.

My colleague talked about the grants to the music industry. That would be something that the industry needs and would create new jobs. That's what my friends across the way want; they want us to create new jobs.

My friend from the NDP says we just increased the employer health tax credit for small business. We did that so it will create opportunities for new jobs. It will create—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate again here this morning on the budget bill, Bill 65.

I would agree with the member from Scarborough Centre, the minister, on his comments regarding the Toronto Maple Leafs last night. Although it was a tough, tough loss—my friend here from Northumberland is a Boston Bruins fan, in front of me, so don't mind me if I smack him in the back of the head. But a tough loss for the Leafs last night and all of Leafs Nation.

As far as his comments on young entrepreneurs, he is right: We are producing some great young minds here in Ontario. Unfortunately, those great young minds, as he alluded to, are being sought after by Silicon Valley and places far away from Ontario because they can't find work here in this province: 16.5% of young people under the age of 25 can't get a job in Ontario. I know lots of people, and they tell me that all the time in Prince Edward-Hastings—parents whose kids have graduated from university and college who just can't find a place in the workplace. This budget really does nothing for them.

My friend across the way is blaming the Conservatives for the blackout in 2003. There was a little event in Ohio that actually precipitated anything that may have occurred here.

We will not be supporting the budget, and I can't believe the Liberal farm team and, to my left, the NDP will be supporting the budget. I look forward to a vote on this bill in the very near future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Durham, the member for Trinity-Spadina, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River and the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for their comments.

I wouldn't hold too much against the member for Northumberland-Quinte West for supporting the Bruins. They are my second favourite team; the Leafs are my favourite, growing up in Toronto, of course. But anybody my age would have grown up in the Bobby Orr era, so you've got to forgive Bruins fans for being Bruins fans because that was the be-all and end-all back then, and we're all about the same age.

I do want to comment that he actually made my case, I think, for me when he talked about the fact—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: He did?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes. Youth unemployment is at 16.5%, and that's very high. That's why it's so important that he ought to be supporting this budget, because the Youth Jobs Strategy will provide 30,000 jobs for our young people, something very, very important. Now is the time that our young people need those job opportunities. The budget provides that. So I think maybe he ought to reconsider his lack of support for the budget.

I thank the member for Scarborough-Rouge River for his comments. They're chippy and spot-on, as usual.

The member for Trinity-Spadina is no longer with us right now, but I thank him for his comments. I do think, though, that helping small business helps our economy in many, many different ways. It creates jobs. They are the backbone of our economy. So providing our small business owners a break through the employer health tax levy

is something that, I think, we ought to be doing and something I would have thought the NDP would be very, very supportive of. Traditionally, they would have been.

Madam Speaker, in the 20 seconds or less, I want to say that if you're a young person in this province, you ought to be supporting this budget for the opportunities it presents. If you're a senior in this province, you ought to be supporting the budget because it helps you stay in your home. If you're a driver in this province, you'll want to be supporting it because it helps keep your insurance rates affordable. There are a lot of reasons to support the budget, not a lot of reasons not to. So I'll be supporting it, and I urge my colleagues opposite to as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?
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Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm pleased to join the debate today. It's always important for us to voice the concerns of our constituents. When we go back to our ridings, those are the people who bring substance to the job that we have and that we were elected to do. When we listen to the people of Ontario and the people of our ridings, they're giving us a message. The message they gave us in the last election, in October 2012, is that this is a minority government.

We've elected a minority government, and it's a democratic process. Their voices were heard, and New Democrats have respected that decision of the people of Ontario. That's why we're here. We're here debating the budget because it is a democratic process. Each one of my constituents in London-Fanshawe and every person in Ontario needs to have a voice in this budget. By not participating in debate, you're really doing a disservice to the people you represent. They sent you here for their voice. They can't speak in the Legislature, so they elected you. They elected each and every one of us to stand up for them and to give feedback to this budget.

Also, New Democrats went one step further. We also put up a website and a phone number, because if I can't get to people in London-Fanshawe on the weekend when I'm there to do the work of the constituency, then I want to hear from them 24/7. We have certainly made sure we're respectfully listening to the people of Ontario and we want to hear what they have to say before we make up our minds. We can't just say, "No, before the budget is even released, we're not voting on it. Sorry, we're not going to participate in a democratic process. We're not going to debate."

Unfortunately, that's what the Conservatives have done. They have stepped out of this vote—well, sorry, they've made it clear that they're not voting, before even actually taking the time to consider what the people of Ontario have been telling them. Maybe they're only talking to one particular constituent, but you have to broaden your conversations. It's not just about the people you represent. It's about all the constituents in London-Fanshawe. When someone calls my office, regardless of who they voted for, we are there to serve them. We are there to make sure their needs are met, and we do the best

we can. That's what our office is there for, and that's what I'm here for.

I've heard many, many people talk to us, call the office and phone line, and write to us, and they're saying, "We elected a minority government, so we want to see you get results." There are some good things in this budget, and that's because we participated in this budget, as we should. This is not an NDP budget; it's a Liberal budget, but the ideas that we've put forward, this government put in the budget. Yes, I'm glad that those things are there, but it doesn't mean that it's a *carte blanche*—"I'm going to vote for the budget" or "I'm not going to vote for the budget." It means we take considerate time to look at a document before we make decisions.

When I hear some of the comments from one particular member, they seem so unpredictable. They seem to be off-the-cuff, and that's not how a debate should be. A debate should be considerate, with factual knowledge and logical arguments back and forth before you make your mind up. I hope that some of the Conservatives will take the time to rethink just making a decision on a knee-jerk reaction because they don't think it's a process that should be considered consciously, in a democratic way of doing things before you decide. You can't do that. You have to have discussions on all things before you say no. You just can't say no without having some forethought into something before you do that.

We know that Ontarians feel they've been taken for granted. We know that they've lost a lot of faith in this government, and they've told us. I've heard in my riding, "I don't want an election, Teresa, but I want to make sure that this government delivers, so go out there and hold them accountable." We have that piece that we asked for, the financial accountability officer. That makes sense. That's something that people understand.

This government has failed in many ways. They have failed in eHealth; that's billions of dollars spent unwisely, wasted, when we have a health care system that has, of course, world-class facilities, nurses and doctors. Everyone who works in those institutions, I value what they do and they certainly do a wonderful job, but our job as a government is to make sure the tax dollars, the people's precious health care dollars, are spent on those services.

So we asked also for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman said back in 2012—and this is the part where I talk about maybe some facts, some logic when we're debating this budget. In 2012, the Ombudsman said the following: "I'm often asked—especially now that budgets are so tight—how much it would cost to extend the Ontario Ombudsman's mandate to include hospitals. The naysayers—and we'll use the Conservatives as an example"—excuse me; the Ombudsman didn't say they're going to use the Conservatives as an example. I'll correct that record just right now. So this is the quote from the Ombudsman—

Interjection: It would have been funny if he had.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, I certainly wouldn't want to put a shadow of a doubt on that.

"The naysayers envision a huge, expensive new layer of bureaucracy. But there's no reason it can't be cost-neutral. Indeed, that was the experience in Quebec—resources were simply reallocated from the health ministry.

"And it's worth noting that my office is already extremely cost-effective. In the past fiscal year, we handled about 18,000 complaints on a budget of ... \$11 million."

So here is the expert, the Ombudsman, André Marin, who is trusted by the people of Ontario and, I think, also trusted by the members of this Legislature. From what I have seen from André Marin in the short time that I've been here, I think that man has a lot of integrity, character and expertise. I believe he could be the Ombudsman to oversee the hospitals, the health care sector and the long-term care. We are the only province in Canada that doesn't have an Ombudsman. We need the Ombudsman.

I get quite emotional about the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs in London, Windsor and Peterborough. That is a tragic situation. I know the minister is trying to do her best to put in some oversight and she's got some new regulations in. But the fact remains that if the outsourcing of those drugs was done five years ago, which it was, that would have been maybe a recourse that could have happened, where the Ombudsman could have looked at that process and said, "You've outsourced the drugs. Now here are the checks and balances that you should have in place by changing that system." And maybe we wouldn't have this tragic situation today.

I had a press conference on Friday in my office with one of the victims of the underdosing—a very wonderful man, very gracious to come and tell his story: Barry Vickery. Mr. Vickery has an optimistic attitude, because you have to have that kind of attitude and not be self-defeating until you know what the reality is that you're going to be dealing with, especially with your health. He was very passionate about what he talked about, and his experience. But he agrees that a third party is needed—an impartial third party. When something goes wrong in the health care system, we need to investigate and people need to have confidence in that investigation. It can't be a partisan, tainted process where people don't feel that they've got the answers.

So I think that's also what we're talking about here when we talk about the budget. We don't want a knee-jerk reaction saying, you know, "Let's vote it down," or "I support it"; we want accountability. When we talk about the two pieces that we introduced currently, they make a lot of sense. They're very reasonable and they're very practical. When you have money that has been spent unwisely—people are tired of that.

Therefore, we are saying there are ways to bring trust back to this government. There are ways to bring trust back to government in general. That's by making sure any government is held accountable with an accountability financial officer. Be it the Liberals, be it the Conservatives or be it New Democrats, we are responsible to the people of Ontario. We are accountable to the people of Ontario, whether it be a majority or a minority, and we

should make sure their precious tax dollars are spent on the services they expect—

Ms. Catherine Fife: And they deserve.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:—and they deserve—well deserve. Because we all know how hard it is to go out there every day and make sure that there's food on the table and that you have a roof over your head and then, when you need health care, it's there to rely on and the money you've contributed to the health care system is being used to look after yourself and your family and your community.

Speaker, I just want to put that out there, that I really feel passionately about the Ombudsman and this government, I hope, really understands that that should be in their proposals. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Margaret Howard. She is the grandmother of page Brigid Howard-Waddingham. She's from the great city of Owen Sound in the wonderful riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd just like to congratulate the Toronto Maple Leafs for making game seven, but I also want to congratulate the Ottawa Senators, Canada's only hockey team—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I might have thought somebody might have learned that we want to maybe do it as a point of order after introductions, but we'll see what happens.

The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to introduce some summer interns who'll be working in the Ministry of Rural Affairs this summer, in the members' east gallery: Matthew Scoon, Gabrielle Schachter, Parker MacKay and Zahir Chowdhury. They will be serving Kawartha Dairy ice cream tomorrow during Peterborough Day from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the afternoon in rooms 228 and 230. I want to put them to work early.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to welcome some special guests from the riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook—they are the proud parents, grandmother and brother of Benjamin Comley, who is our page captain here today.

Benjamin is an impressive young man—a grade 8 student from Bellmoore Elementary School. He returned to school after a very serious injury and still was at the top of his class. He is an MVP and most dedicated player in hockey and, despite his young age, also very hard at work in supporting local charities. So I'm pleased to introduce his very proud parents, Michelle and Greg Comley, brother Jacob and grandmother Linda Moore joining us here today.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to introduce two residents from my constituency in Barrie: Sylvia and Terry Stutz, who are joining us, visiting the Legislature today and joining me for lunch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for page Brigid Howard-Waddingham, grandmother Margaret Howard is here visiting her granddaughter.

For the member from Mississauga—Brampton South, on behalf of page Brendan Adamo, mother Rita, father Stephen, sister Robyn—a twin, I think—grandmother Collen and grandfather Louis are here. Congratulations and thank you for joining us here at Queen's Park.

Point of order from the member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Legislature—even those whose loyalties are misplaced—and all Ontarians to help me congratulate the Toronto Maple Leafs on an outstanding season, even though our hope will have to be deferred until next year.

I'll say this: Now that the Leafs are no longer in the game the only Ontario team left is Ottawa, and let's lead again in the province of Ontario in hockey with the Ottawa Senators.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will note that the members from the Ottawa region all stood up and applauded. It is now time—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: With the exception of Yaka-buski.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somebody turn her mike off.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, it is off.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, at the justice committee today, we saw one of your Liberal members conducting himself in a way that clearly is putting the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of the interests of taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I'm worried that there has been direction from the Premier, or the Premier's office, to try to turn a committee—instead of trying to get answers for taxpayers on why you cancelled gas plants, the costs, and why you engaged in an orchestrated cover-up—to try to turn that into a circus instead of actually getting answers for the committee.

So let me ask the Deputy Premier: In light of this approach that Liberals are taking to create chaos instead of getting answers for taxpayers, will you support our call for a full judicial inquiry into the gas plants scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question, and I am delighted to know that he actually appeared at committee this morning. That is fantastic and a big and important step.

I am, however, terribly disappointed to learn that he had no answers to any of the questions that were asked. He appeared, and we applaud him for appearing, but unfortunately, the answers were simply lacking in any substance, in stark contrast to the Premier, Speaker, who appeared before the committee. She answered questions; she's committed to being open. Nobody wants to get the answers to these questions more than our Premier, and her actions are demonstrating that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Deputy Premier: I will say, and I'll give credit where credit is due, that the former energy minister, Ms. Cansfield, the member from Etobicoke Centre, did conduct herself and ask responsible questions that were productive, and we commend her for that. But there's certainly a different tone from your members, so I wanted to see who was making the call. Was the member for Vaughan acting on his own, or was it Etobicoke Centre?

Clearly, then, when the Deputy Premier gives that kind of answer—your approach on this gas plant committee, obviously, then, is to create as much chaos as possible instead of trying to get responsible answers for taxpayers, who are stuck with the bill. I find that highly regrettable. I expected better from Kathleen Wynne, but she has chosen her course.

Again, in light of this orchestrated attempt by the Liberals—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just quickly, I'm going to remind the leader to use the title or the riding, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. I apologize.

I expected better from Premier Wynne. So let me ask you, in your capacity as Deputy Premier—given that your early efforts show no interest in actually getting answers for taxpayers on the costs of the cancellation of the gas plants, I'll ask you again: Why not then support a judicial inquiry which can compel truthful testimony and get answers for taxpayers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that we review the actions that the Premier has taken since she became Premier of this province. She is taking full responsibility for improving the planning of these large energy projects. This new approach will include strong public consultation. It will include formal municipal input. It will include better decision-making. This report will come back to us by August 1. I think that's a very important piece of what we need to do to fix the problems that got us to where we are today.

In addition, she has written to the Auditor General and asked him to review Oakville. He has agreed to do that. She immediately called the House back and struck com-

mittees, expanded the scope of the committee, offered documents from across government.

I am extremely proud of what our Premier has done, and I only wish the Leader of the Opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll respond to the Deputy Premier: With respect, the Premier has failed to apologize. She has not given direct or straight answers on some pretty basic questions about what she knew and when, and clearly was there at the cabinet table, at Dalton McGuinty's right hand, when they chose to cover up this information.

Again to the Deputy Premier: I think the motive of the Liberals was revealed today by the actions of your members at committee, which is more so to obscure facts, to throw mud, instead of getting answers for taxpayers at the end of the day. Let me ask an important question. If you're rejecting—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess, what's wrong with this? What is wrong with having a judicial inquiry, just like we saw with Justice Gomery, which can compel truthful testimony and get answers? Will it take the threat of jail doors closing behind members from the Liberals to actually compel truthful testimony and get answers for taxpayers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's talk for a second about this call for a so-called judicial inquiry. I'd like to quote an expert in the field—actually, a noted expert in public policy. He had this to say: "The cost of a public inquiry is excessive; we don't believe that that's necessary. We're paid as individuals to represent our constituents and to hold the government. And that's where we expect this, this hearing to take place."

That was the member from Cambridge who said that. So, basically, we have a Leader of the Opposition who stood there in that field on YouTube and said that if he was Premier, it'd be "done, done, done." He is standing today to ask for a judicial inquiry, which his members opposed, into a decision that he supported.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Deputy Premier, and I do hope that you'll take the time, Deputy Premier, to answer my questions instead of engaging in the types of games your House leader tends to.

We've been very clear for months now that we believe in a full judicial inquiry, just like we saw with Justice Gomery with the sponsorship scandal involving the Liberals in Quebec at the federal level. We think a judicial inquiry is preferable, and at least my colleagues in the NDP have put an option on the table on a public inquiry. We think a judicial inquiry, though, will empower a judge to actually compel testimony with the threat,

quite frankly, that if you do break the law by perjury, if it's found you have buried or intentionally destroyed documents—these are very serious accusations. That's why we support a judicial inquiry.

Let me you ask you, if you truly want to get answers for taxpayers, why do you oppose a judicial inquiry to actually get the truth once and for all?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The Leader of the Opposition has the gall to talk about games. I watched his appearance in front of the justice committee this morning. Mr. Speaker, 28 times direct questions were put to the Leader of the Opposition, simple questions like what was his costing? Who did he consult when he made the decision to call for the cancellation of the plants? Even to acknowledge his opposition to the plants—28 times he would not answer a single question. I have not seen skating like that since I saw those old clips of Barbara Ann Scott on TV. It was incredible to watch the evasiveness of the Leader of the Opposition. The fact that he will not hold the PC Party even to a minimal standard the way he's holding the government—he should be apologizing and offering answers to those very straightforward questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously, we can see what the Liberals are trying to do here. They're trying to create chaos; they're trying to avoid answering. They're trying to obscure the essential issues as much as possible. I think that's very clear now.

I just want to say that I find it regrettable that Premier Wynne is engaging in this. I thought she was going to be different. I thought she was going to take it down a different path, but she's engaged in the same old Liberal games of obfuscation, dithering and stonewalling. That's why a government I lead will bring in a full judicial inquiry to get answers on behalf of taxpayers once and for all.

Let me ask this in a different way, then. I think that a government so prepared to play these types of games, so prepared to bury the truth and so prepared to put Liberal interests ahead of taxpayers—clearly you've lost the moral authority to govern. Will you call our confidence motion to the floor of the assembly to vote up or down whether we support this government or want to see it change?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, obfuscation, dithering, stonewalling—I think they are great descriptions of what we saw today from the Leader of the Opposition. He would not even acknowledge this pamphlet here that was passed out to thousands of Ontarians that said the following: "The only party that will stop the Sherway power plant is the Ontario PC Party. On October 6, vote Ontario PC."

Mr. Speaker, we have Twitter, we have press releases, we have newspaper clippings and we have a YouTube video showing the Leader of the Opposition clearly op-

posed to the Mississauga plant and his promise to cancel it if he was Premier, yet he refused to acknowledge it today. There was so much obfuscation I half expected him to come up with the evil-twin-brother defence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Hon. John Milloy: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me try the Deputy Premier one last time, Speaker. Deputy Premier, this power plant scandal is extremely serious and Ontarians would expect you to take it seriously, as opposed to the clownish approach of the House leader, which has tended to turn this whole thing into a circus.

We all know that the Liberals are willing to throw money at any kind of situation to try to save Liberal seats. That's clearly evident with Mississauga and Oakville. Now you're trying to throw money to buy the support of the NDP for a budget—in short, an NDP budget written by the Liberals to support Liberal seats. I don't think that's in the interests of taxpayers. I don't think that's in the interests of the 600,000 men and women who have no job to go to this morning. I think, clearly, if we want to restore hope to this great province of Ontario, if we want to get this province back on track, to bring good jobs to Ontario, to respect every taxpayer dollar, to make sure that we live within our means and end these scandals, it's time to change the government, it's time to change the leadership and to put Ontario on the right track and make Ontario lead again.

Call our motion. Allow the vote. Don't you agree?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. In the thrust and parry of the House, I may have missed an opportunity to ask a member to withdraw. Under the circumstances, I do my best to try to hear all of the different—and I do read my thesaurus as often as I can, to make any references that you're unparliamentary. I also leave it to members themselves: If they find themselves in a situation where they can withdraw, they can withdraw themselves. Having said that, I'll do my best to stay on top of things.

Hon. John Milloy: The Leader of the Opposition just doesn't get it, Mr. Speaker. This is about the standards that they are holding the government to. We have a committee of the Legislature which is looking into the decision to cancel the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville. The simple fact of the matter was that every single party of this Legislature supported the cancellation of that plant. The Leader of the Opposition aggressively campaigned in the last election to do that. He cannot appear in front of the justice committee this morning and deny that fact. It is a matter of public record. If he wants to talk about obfuscation, Mr. Speaker, he should be looking in the mirror, because his appearance in front of the committee this morning was outrageous. Twenty-eight times he was asked direct questions on very, very simple matters, even to acknowledge the fact that he opposed the

plant. Instead, he decided to go for obfuscation and disrespecting the committee and its members—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

By continuing to make that reference—I'm going to call everyone to order on that issue. So just tone it down.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I put my question, I'd like to take an opportunity on behalf of Ontarians and members of the Legislature to let the family of Tim Bosma know that we are grieving with them. We found out today that his remains were found by the police. His wife, Sharlene, and his daughter, and his mother, Mary, I'm sure, and all their friends and family are grieving very much today. I think it's important that we say that we're grieving along with them.

Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. While the Premier has been campaigning and electioneering around the province, New Democrats have been actually listening to Ontarians about their thoughts on the budget. They're saying that the government has to do better if they expect Ontarians to trust them. Is the government going to listen to Ontarians and bring some accountability, some transparency and some fairness to their budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I too want to express sincere condolences to the Bosma family. This is news that we have just received, and I think all of us have hearts that are breaking as a result of that news. We are together on that sentiment.

Speaker, as we move to the budget and who's-saying-what about the budget, it might be helpful if we look at what some Ontarians are saying about the budget. Sid Ryan—I think the member opposite will know who Sid Ryan is. He is, of course, a big supporter, a former NDP candidate, and what Sid Ryan says is: "There are good things in this budget that I think we can work with in labour, that I think the NDP can work with."

1050

Fred Hahn, the president of CUPE—again, someone more well-known perhaps to the members opposite than to our side—says, "I don't think the people of Ontario"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the last 12 months, Ontarians have seen scandals grow at Ornge; they've learned that not one, but two Premiers have hidden the true costs of moving the gas plants; and they learned that over 1,000 people were given the wrong cancer medication. Does this government really believe that it is doing enough when it comes to accountability and oversight?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's talk about what some other Ontarians are saying about the budget. Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU, says, "I don't see it as an election budget."

Gail Nyberg, the executive director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, says, "Key initiatives in this budget will help more people afford to pay the rent and put food on the

table, whether they are families with children or single people who are making the move from social assistance to employment. We encourage all parties to support the budget and the positive changes that will help low-income Ontarians facing poverty and hunger."

Sarah Blackstock, who is with the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, says, "We think this budget is an opportunity to continue reducing poverty in Ontario. We are really eager to see the opposition parties work with the government to ensure that we continue making progress."

Many Ontarians are weighing in, and they're pretty positive about this budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After the budget was introduced, New Democrats asked Ontarians what they thought, but, at the same time, the Liberals started printing election pamphlets and campaigning. New Democrats are interested in delivering real results for people, while the Liberals seem to be more interested in their own political power.

Will the government listen to people and bring accountability and transparency to their budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's listen to what the Canadian Auto Workers and Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union has to say: "The 2013-14 Ontario budget represents an important shift in emphasis by the provincial government and will make a positive difference in the lives of many Ontarians."

David Coles, the national president of the Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union says, "This [budget] is proof that minority government can work to the advantage of working people."

Ken Lewenza, the national president of the Canadian Auto Workers, says, "These [budget] investments in our social and economic fabric are both badly needed, and appreciated."

The people of Ontario have spoken. They have spoken loud and clear. This is exactly the right budget for these times, and I look forward to the third party supporting it.

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Finance. Is the Minister of Finance still committed to a poorly thought-out network of tolled carpool lanes that will cost Ontarians more than \$300 million to build before they even generate a nickel?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, I find it odd that the third party—or, for that matter, any of the opposition members—would feel that it's inappropriate to invest in our infrastructure, in our public transit, in the construction of roads and bridges, enabling our gridlock to ease so that we can be more competitive in the long term.

Constructing more HOV lanes is about facilitating people to get to and from home more quickly, more safely. It's also about enabling our businesses and transports to get around the city and to get around Ontario more

effectively. An hour in gridlock is an hour lost to their competitiveness. We have to invest more for the benefit of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I find it surprising that this government is about to embark on a new Lexus lane boondoggle in the province of Ontario.

While the Premier has been sending campaign staff to transit stations, New Democrats have actually been listening to Ontarians about what they think about transit. They think that transit and transportation infrastructure should be funded fairly and transparently.

Will the finance minister commit to cancelling his poorly-thought-out and outrageously expensive tolled carpool lanes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm going to allow the Minister of Transportation to speak in a moment, but I think it's essential that we all appreciate and understand that we need to continue to invest to be competitive in the long term. This is not about making election-cycle decisions; this is not about playing partisan politics; it's about playing for the people of Ontario.

As for constructing more HOV lanes, for the member opposite to suggest that that is somehow inappropriate—it works in other jurisdictions around North America. It eases gridlock and it enables things to move more quickly, more safely and more effectively. Don't be short-sighted about this, don't play politics with this and don't spin it. This is about moving people quickly and more safely, and we all have to be together on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—ary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government plans to spend \$300 million to toll carpooling lanes, but whether it's gas plants, eHealth or the Presto fare card system, which has ballooned to almost three times its initial cost, this government cannot seem to manage Ontario's money. Will the finance minister put his plan for a \$300-million network of tolled carpool lanes on hold?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm not sure where the leader of the third party gets her information. First of all, we are not tolling HOV lanes. There is an expansion of HOV lanes. The system of HOT lanes does not diminish by one car the access to the entire system, including the HOT lanes, for people who have more than one vehicle.

The member of the third party said that there's no plan. The Big Move has been around since 2008. KPMG put out a detailed study that explained in detail how HOT lanes work. I am confused, given that there is a plan and a detailed explanation, how someone with a party that really tops the charts for luxury car ownership can make those kinds of statements.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. The stench from Ornge just continues to get more offensive. Last week at the public accounts hearing, we

heard that the director of the forensic investigation team at Ornge confirmed that millions of public dollars were siphoned from health care into the Mazza scheme.

At the same hearing, we heard that the director that the minister and her deputies put in charge of a new oversight program of Ornge and his newly appointed staff have no experience in either air or ambulance services—none, and yet they're responsible now for overseeing a multi-million dollar organization that has serious financial and organizational challenges.

I want to know from the minister: Who will she hold accountable for this last experience of incompetency—the deputy minister, or will she accept responsibility herself?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that it saddens me to see the member from Newmarket—Aurora continuing to hammer on the very hard-working people who are making our air ambulance system work.

He raises the issue about experience at the air ambulance oversight branch in the ministry, so let me tell you, Speaker: There is plenty of expertise in land and air ambulance operations at my ministry's emergency health services branch. Let me just discuss some of the people, the staff, who are experienced in land and ambulance operations. They include the senior manager of operations, along with three senior field managers and the manager of investigation services; the senior manager of corporate planning and regulatory compliance; the senior manager of performance and quality management; the senior manager of finance and corporate support; the manager of inspections, certifications and regulatory compliance; policy and operational assessment; and financial planning and reporting monitoring.

The member opposite does not know what he's talking about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1100

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, thank you, Minister. I have a response, Speaker, but I'll hold it back.

The fact of the matter is that the one program this minister put in place to oversee Ornge—that director has no experience in air ambulance. He admitted that at the committee hearings. Not one of the six people he hired to help him in oversight responsibility has any experience in either air or land ambulance. That is who we expect would have some experience.

The minister knows full well that she and her deputy, Patricia Li, and her deputy minister, Mr. Saad Rafi, have yet one more time made a huge mistake in terms of their responsibility of oversight.

I now want to know this: Does she know anything about this document that sets out the requirement for \$22 million more in expenditure every year to cover off the debt that she allowed to incur? Is that \$22 million included in the budget, or will she allow a cutback in more health care services at Ornge to pay—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the air ambulance program oversight branch, on the other hand, has substantial expertise and experience in ensuring that transfer payment agencies are transparent, accountable and get value for money when spending taxpayer dollars. That's their job.

Richard Jackson, whom the member has mentioned, is the director of the EHSB and AAPOB and has extensive experience in oversight of transfer payment agencies, including community colleges, private career colleges, the Ontario Student Assistance Program, Toronto's children's aid societies, children's mental health agencies, developmental services agencies and women's shelters. Speaker, this is an expert in oversight—fiscal responsibility.

I think this is exactly the kind of expertise that the member opposite would like to see looking over Ornge air ambulance services. It's what he has been calling for, and it's what we've delivered.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The question is to the Acting Premier. For months, Ontarians have been learning how interference by the Premier's office ratcheted up the cost of the gas plants. The Premier's principal secretary agreed to "preserve the value of TransCanada's project." It's unaccountable; it doesn't respect Ontarians.

Will the Acting Premier admit what everyone else knows, that the interference of Liberal political staff drove up the cost of the gas plant cancellation to more than half a billion dollars?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This is a matter that has been discussed in great detail at committee. We've heard from a number of different witnesses, including Jamison Steeve, formerly of the Premier's office, who testified that, "My discussions with TransCanada were exploratory in nature...."

Sean Mullin, another Premier's office employee, said, "We were not authorized to ... and we did not engage in" any negotiation.

Representatives from TCE themselves—the gentleman Chris Breen said that "they were—certainly not negotiating in the sense of fine-detail dollars and cents."

This is something that the committee has looked at and I think has been dealt with by the witnesses who have appeared before the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Acting Premier: The promises made by the Premier's office made it impossible for the Ontario Power Authority to negotiate a good deal for ratepayers. When the OPA made an offer to TransCanada to cancel the plant in Oakville, TransCanada turned them down. They said, "The Premier's office has given us a sweeter deal."

Ontarians deserve accountability. They expect that their money will be spent wisely, not wasted on Liberal seats. Will the Acting Premier admit that the interference of senior political staff drove up costs so that Ontarians have to pay more?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I think we have to go back to first principles. There were 19 gas plants that were sited in this province, and the government clearly acknowledges that in two of those cases we made an error. We went forward to the people of both Mississauga and Oakville—indeed, the people of Ontario—and said that we would cancel those decisions. That would have costs associated with it.

I remind the honourable member that his leader and his party, and indeed even himself, in public comments said the exact same thing. I would remind him that the Leader of the Opposition, despite the fact that he refused to answer 28 direct questions to him this morning, aggressively said that he would cancel the project.

There were to be costs associated with the cancellation of the project. We knew that. The leader of the New Democratic Party knew that. The leader of the PC Party knew that. Everyone knew that. We listened to the people in those communities and acted accordingly. As to the detailed questions he's asking today, they have all been dealt with in front of the committee.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. We all know that women play a very important role in the province and in this country. Approximately half of Canada's workforce is female. In 2011, female graduates from Ontario's colleges and universities made up nearly 60% of the total. I'm a proud member of this government led by Ontario's first female Premier, and our cabinet and caucus include a large number of women.

Unfortunately, these successes do not translate into the private sector. Women are still critically under-represented in private sector leadership positions, in both management roles and on boards of directors. Several recent reports suggest that the pace at which women in the private sector are reaching senior positions is slowing down, not speeding up.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is our government doing to promote gender diversity in the private sector?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for this important question. We need to tackle this issue as a province because having women in leadership roles drives innovation, improves corporate social responsibility and paves the way to a greater number of women in senior executive roles. In fact, research tells us that companies with high representation of women in senior management positions and on the board outperform those with fewer women on key metrics in financial success.

I'm proud that our government is doing our part by taking strong action to promote the benefits of gender diversity and equal representation in the private sector and on corporate boards and in senior management. In fact, page 291 of the 2013 Ontario budget reaffirms the government's commitment to delivering programs that promote women's equality and addresses the lack of gender diversity on boards and in senior management of major businesses, non-profits and other organizations. We will enlist the Ontario Securities Commission to help us determine the best way to proceed on this disclosure issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that very comprehensive answer. The initiatives that the minister discussed are extremely important in helping ensure that Ontario's hard-working women are fairly represented in private sector leadership positions.

While women are still under-represented on corporate boards and in management positions, it has been shown that women can find great success in small businesses as well. Small businesses are the source of more jobs in Ontario than any other sector, and female-owned small businesses are one of the fastest-growing segments of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is this government doing to provide women with the opportunities and the resources to become successful small business owners or operators?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: There is no doubt that small businesses are the backbone of this province's economy. Small businesses, particularly those run by women, play an integral part in driving innovation, creating jobs and growing the economy of Ontario.

Ontario's 2013 budget makes smart investments that will strengthen the economy and takes action to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. It recognizes the importance of small business and entrepreneurship. The budget is a testament to that through measures such as the Commercialization and Innovation Voucher program, the establishment of the venture capital fund in partnership with the private sector and more support for women entrepreneurs.

We see women being able to get their businesses off the ground through the help of our small business enterprise centres and the new microlending initiative that will help low-income women build and grow their small businesses. These initiatives are good for women and they're good for the province of Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning. My question is for the Deputy Premier. Three months have passed since they promised to be "open and transparent" regarding the gas plant scandal, yet the Liberals continue to go to extraordinary efforts to keep the facts from the public.

We've learned that the email accounts of three of the former Premier's former staffers, including his chief of

staff, no longer exist and can't be recovered; this, despite a legal requirement to keep those records for five years before going to Ontario archives. Vital documents that could have helped the justice committee get to the answers are conveniently missing. This warped version of "open and transparent" is not the kind of Ontario we want.

My question is, will you support our motion for a non-confidence vote on your scandal-plagued government?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, he has the gall to stand today and talk about transparency after the performance of his leader in front of the committee. Twenty-eight times he was asked direct questions—not complicated questions; not even trick questions. We asked him to simply acknowledge the fact that he starred in a YouTube video, saying that if he was Premier of the province, this gas plant would be "done, done, done." We asked him the simple question as to what was going to be his costing, what experts he had asked, and who in his party had reached out to do the proper analysis. He put on his ice skates and avoided every single question.

We got no transparency from him. If the Leader of the Opposition will not tell us, will the honourable member in his supplementary tell us whether he will encourage the Conservative candidates in those ridings to come forward? We've been asking them; we've been begging them; we've been pleading with them. We want some answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We bring out sworn testimony and he brings out dance routines. We're getting tired of that.

Let's move on from the destruction of documents to the withholding of the real costs of this Liberal scandal and when you knew them. Michael Lyle of the Ontario Power Authority was asked at the justice committee last week when the Liberal government knew the Mississauga cancellation was much more than you publicly stated. His response was, "They would have been aware that there were costs that had been paid more than the \$190 million," and that was back in July 2012. Yet you and your cabinet colleagues clung to that figure for nine months until the Auditor General told us what you already knew.

This is failed leadership at its worst, and it's time for a test of confidence. Will you support our motion tomorrow to allow a non-confidence vote in this Legislature?

Hon. John Milloy: I would remind the honourable member that in the testimony of the Premier several weeks ago—she appeared when asked, unlike the Leader of the Opposition. But in the testimony of the Premier several weeks ago, I believe there were four or five different numbers that came forward from the OPA.

I think that all of us in this House realize the reasonable thing to do is to have the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, finish his report on the Oakville situation. That report was undertaken at the personal

request of the Premier upon receiving office. Let us let the Auditor General do his work. I think the one thing we've found through testimony of various experts at the committee is that this is a very complicated and technical matter. I think we should leave it with this fine officer of the Legislature, the Auditor General.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday the minister appeared to take a step back on high-occupancy tolls. While the budget speech said that the government would commit to moving quickly to implement tolls, the minister now says that the government is not rushing into anything. Has the minister now realized that putting high-occupancy tolls on hundreds of kilometres of Ontario's highways is an expensive and risky scheme that Metrolinx agrees is not a significant revenue source for transit?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, no, we are not taking a step back, and no, we are not rushing into anything. We are going forward steadily down the path we committed to in the budget. I'm sorry that people in that party are feeling hoisted on their own petard with their confusing positions on transit that we're getting into this word detail.

Let me read the budget very carefully so it's not lost on anyone: "The province is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicle ... lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy toll (HOV/HOT) lanes, in which carpooling drivers would"—and I want to emphasize—"continue to drive for free, but other drivers would be able to choose to drive in these lanes for a toll. Toll-free options would exist on all highways that have HOV/HOT lanes. This model has been successfully implemented in several places, including in Florida, Texas and California."

That has been published for quite a while now. I don't think it's complicated English. I'm sure the member opposite understands it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the simplicity of the message.

The Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Finance appear to be awfully optimistic about the revenue potential of high-occupancy toll lanes. But in February, we learned that the new HOT lanes in Washington, DC, lost over \$11 million in just their first six weeks of operation. The Washington, DC, HOT lanes are only 14 miles long. Meanwhile, the province has committed to building up to 450 kilometres worth of HOT lanes.

Will the government stop wasting time with risky tolling schemes and instead focus on the real job of building new transportation options for Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Would the third party stop futzing around and decide whether they're going to support what is the largest investment in infrastructure and transportation in the history of this province? We have more projects out there, like the Eglinton Crosstown,

which is, quite frankly, the largest—just on its own—transit project in the history of Ontario.

We introduced HOV lanes in 2005. They've been a tremendous success. There were naysayers at the time. We are prudently looking at the experiences. The member opposite's view is somewhat limited. California has had these for three years. They did not make money in the first year. By the second year, they were successful. By the third year, they were a roaring success. Their valuation was released just two weeks ago.

So, yes, we are prudently looking at all the evidence, the experiences of other places, and we will make sure Ontarians get solutions to their congestion challenges.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Last night, I held a town hall in my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville, where we discussed the budget. Some of the things we talked about, as you can imagine, were auto insurance, increased investments in home care, our infrastructure plans and our deficit-control plans, but one area that generated a lot of interest, a lot of questions, was our youth employment strategy. Would the Minister of Economic Development and Trade please tell us what plans we have in our budget to increase well-paying jobs for our young?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for her question and her hard work on this issue.

Our budget proposes a comprehensive Youth Jobs Strategy of \$295 million over two years. This strategy actually incorporates many of the good suggestions that came from the NDP but goes substantially further on additional measures to help youth get jobs.

Our Youth Jobs Strategy is designed to create employment opportunities for about 30,000 youth across the province and to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in Ontario. Our government's already begun consulting on the strategy. In fact, last Friday I had the opportunity, together with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, to consult with about 30 individuals from business, union representatives, academics, obviously many youth themselves and not-for-profit organizations to talk about how we might refine the strategy so it's most impactful.

I encourage both opposition parties to work with us to pass the budget so we can move forward with this important initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for your great response.

I just want to give a shout-out to all the people in my riding who came out for the town hall despite the Leafs game. It was a great town hall. I just wanted to say that.

I do want to say that we are all about building our community. As great as it is to have a good employment strategy for our youth, we want to make sure that we can employ our youth in the communities they live. So I'd like to ask the minister what our plans are for our rural

youth to make sure that they have equal opportunities for good well-paying jobs.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to commend the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for her wonderful leadership in her community.

Our 2013 budget delivers for rural Ontario. The \$295-million youth strategy will benefit young people across Ontario, and will strengthen rural communities.

In addition to this investment, our government has been helping to connect students with jobs in rural Ontario communities through our Rural Summer Jobs Service. Since 2007, this program has connected 18,000 students with jobs and helped over 7,000 rural employers. The Rural Summer Jobs Service is part of our government's Ontario summer jobs strategy. It's another way we're helping to promote innovation and entrepreneurship amongst our people.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Havelock, Ontario, last Saturday, meeting with my good friend Elmer Buchanan. They're excited in Havelock about the summer jobs for rural youth.

1120

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Deputy Premier. It's clear from your answers here in this House and the actions of your Liberal members of the justice committee that you have no interest in seeing the committee get to the bottom of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plant scandals.

The public deserves accountability. They deserve to know how your government wasted \$600 million. The Ontario PC Party has moved a want of confidence motion. If you'll agree to support our opposition day motion tomorrow, we can settle once and for all who stands for the people of Ontario and who stands to support the Liberal Party and its scandals.

Acting Premier, will you do the right and proper thing? Will you support our opposition day motion and bring our want of confidence motion to the floor of this Legislature?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Acting Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The line of questioning that was pursued this morning, the answers that I've given in the House—there's nothing frivolous here. The simple fact of the matter is that there is a concern about the cancellation of these gas plants. The point that we're trying to make is that every party of the House—particularly the opposition party aggressively campaigned that if the Leader of the Opposition became Premier, he would do the exact same thing: He would cancel the plant.

I believe those are relevant facts that the committee needs to know, so we invited the Leader of the Opposition this morning in front of the committee. We didn't ask him tough or technical questions; we simply asked him to acknowledge the fact that not only did he appear in a video and hold a press conference and his candidates put out tweets, and asked him about his costing and about the due diligence that he did. Twenty-eight times he refused to answer those direct questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Liberal Party has no—it's track record is one of obfuscating and scandals, billions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw. Maybe the House leader could withdraw the 30 times he said it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sit down, please. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

The member from Pembroke will simply withdraw with no comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

Your Liberal track record is a laundry list of billions of dollars wasted on scandal after scandal. Whenever you're caught red-handed, you conveniently say, "We're going to set up this committee or that committee," and "This will never happen again."

The problem isn't just accountability; it's the arrogance of that government over there. There's one thing that the people of Ontario can be sure of: If you think you can get away with it, you'll do it again.

So I'm asking you, given your record, once again, will you do the right thing? Tomorrow there's an opposition day motion that will bring a want-of-confidence motion to the floor of this House. Let the people decide—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about caught red-handed? This was the party that went out and paid for robocalls throughout thousands of homes, saying the only way to stop the gas plant was to elect a PC government. This was a party that went out and held press conferences, that dropped leaflets that said, "The only party that will"—and "will" is underlined—"stop the Sherway power plant is the Ontario PC Party. On October 6, vote Ontario PC."

The minimum we wanted was for the Leader of the Opposition to at least acknowledge that position, a very public position, and 28 times he evaded that question in a series of simple questions about his due diligence and his analysis.

There's a double-standard going on here, and I think it's time that the Progressive Conservative Party stood up

and acknowledged the very simple fact that they opposed the principal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. More than a month after we learned about the errors in chemotherapy dosing, patients are still left with the most basic questions of what went wrong. We've seen a lot of finger-pointing and it's only getting worse. This week, Marchese, the drug provider, threatened to sue the Windsor Regional Hospital for defamatory remarks after the hospital did its best to communicate the situation to its patients. My question is simple: Does the minister think that escalating conflict and finger-pointing is benefiting patients in any way?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that my first and last concern has always been for the patients who are affected. That's why, immediately upon learning about this underdosing issue, the appropriate steps were taken. Patients were notified. They had rapid meetings with their oncologists. They had group meetings where they could get answers to the questions that they of course had. We set up a working group with all of the partners around the table, who are working through the issues. We've appointed a third party investigator to look at the entire safety of our cancer drugs supply chain. That work is well under way.

We owe it to the patients of Ontario, not just the patients affected by this underdosing but all patients, that we get answers to the very legitimate questions that they have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister response would be all well and good if it wasn't simply after the fact that these measures were brought into place. Ontario's patients seem to be the ones who continue to be left out of the equation. They want transparency, accountability and answers on how this could have happened.

This week, New Democrats urged the government to grant Ombudsman's oversight over our health care system because patients need someone rooting for them and asking the tough questions. Will the minister finally make sure that someone is working for patients and grant Ombudsman's oversight over our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ontarians have well-deserved confidence in our health care system. Our cancer outcomes are amongst the best in the world. The safety of our cancer care system is beyond reproach, but we must always strive to make it better. Whenever an issue arises that instructs us on how we can strengthen the system, I can assure you that we will move on those recommendations.

Even the member from Nickel Belt acknowledges that an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world. The member from Nickel Belt said that "we have an excellent health care

system" and "an excellent cancer care system." The member is right. I have said over and over again that we have an excellent system but it is not a perfect system, and we are striving every day to make it better.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, a strong northern Ontario economy is important not only for people in northern communities but for the health of the province in general. Our government has been a strong supporter of the north and is taking action to address challenges such as job creation, revitalizing transportation infrastructure and improving vital access to the Ring of Fire.

Part of helping the northern economy grow is ensuring that our largest job creators are supported. Will the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to help northern industries?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for Ottawa—Orléans for the question. The member is right: A strong northern economy is vital for the province as a whole. That's why we introduced the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program in 2010 to assist Ontario's largest industrial electricity consumers reduce their energy costs. These firms are key economic contributors and job creators in the north, and this program supports their employees and communities while maintaining global competitiveness.

Our government is committed to helping the north succeed. That's why we announced in this year's budget that we are investing \$360 million to extend the program for an additional three years, thanks to the advocacy of our northern caucus members. That's why the members opposite should be supporting this budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I'm glad to hear that our government is continuing its strong support for northern communities with this investment.

The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program has been an important program for large firms across the north as they grow and create jobs, but the global recession and its after-effects have created unprecedented challenges for the north, especially the forestry sector. Can the minister provide more details about this program extension and how it will help forestry and other sectors continue to thrive as the economy continues its recovery?

1130

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I mentioned, we are making a \$360-million investment in northern Ontario in this year's budget. The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program was created to help key northern industries like forestry. It reduces energy bills for large consumers in the north by 25%. In fact, since 2010 this rate program has created or protected nearly 16,000 jobs in the north. Those are jobs across 24 northern forestry, steel and mining-related facilities.

As the member mentioned, these industries have faced unprecedented challenges through the global recession

and its after-effects, so I hope all parties in this House stand with us and support the budget to help northern Ontario residents.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the government House leader. Today in the justice committee investigating your government's gas plant scandal, things took an interesting turn. Your party adopted a new strategy: Instead of evading questions in justice committee, you've now undertaken to ask irrelevant questions. The member from Vaughan asked question after question unrelated to the true government costs and the cover-up that the government instituted, instead using his 30 minutes taking cheap political shots—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'll withdraw.

This is a committee with a mandate to get to the bottom of a \$600-million-and-counting scandal that leads directly to the Premier's office. Government House leader, will it take a judicial inquiry and the threat of jail time for this Premier and her party to start taking this matter seriously?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to ask, if the questions were so irrelevant, why did the Leader of the Opposition not answer them? The questions that we were asking were very straightforward. We asked why he was so aggressive in his campaign to cancel the gas plant, why he said that if he was Premier he would cancel it. We asked similar questions to the ones they've asked our members: What kind of analysis and due diligence was done? Mr. Speaker, 28 times questions of that nature were put to the leader of the opposition, and 28 times he avoided asking them. If they are so irrelevant, I am not sure why he would not be forthcoming. If they are so irrelevant, I'm not sure why the PC candidates from that area are not forthcoming. Maybe in the supplementary, the member can talk about the efforts they're making to have those PC candidates come before the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: I have a little message for the government House leader: As the government corruption meter rises, so too do our calls for a judicial inquiry go louder.

After acknowledging YouTube videos and reading quotes—many quotes—the Liberals weren't getting the answers that they were looking for. The government House leader begged the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition to come to the justice committee, and this morning he did. What the Liberals' star witness said this morning is that the McGuinty-Wynne government has not learned its lessons from this scandal, and that they'll do it again if given the chance. That's right, Mr. Speaker: They will spend hundreds of millions of dollars to buy another election if given a chance. We expect the Premier and her office to act responsibly, or at least be truthful with the people of Ontario when her government officials come before a standing committee of this Legislature.

Government House leader, will it take a threat of jail time to achieve some honesty from the party across the aisle, or are you so committed—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let me get this straight: When the Liberal Party, in the last election, promised to cancel the gas plant, it was the worst thing that has ever befallen this society since the Macarena or the plague, and when the Progressive Conservative Party makes the exact same promise, we don't want to talk about it. Some 28 times we asked the Leader of the Opposition just to simply acknowledge his position, and he wouldn't. Why the double standard?

When it comes to a judicial inquiry, we are following the advice of their very own member, who said, "The cost of a public inquiry is excessive. We don't believe that that's necessary. We're paid as individuals to represent our constituents and to hold the government, and that's where we expect this hearing to take place." I could not agree with the honourable member more.

ELLIOT LAKE INQUIRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last week, at the Elliot Lake inquiry, a representative of the Ministry of Labour said the ministry bore no responsibility for the tragedy in which Lucie Aylwin and Doloris Perizzolo tragically lost their lives. The ministry official testified that the employer is responsible for the protection of their workers but that the workers are also responsible for their own safety. They also said that the ministry officials were a check on the system and could not be disciplined as a result of this disaster.

To even imply that these two women were more responsible for their own protection in their place of work than the Ministry of Labour is ridiculous. The Ministry of Labour inspection offices were housed in the Algo mall for 10 years but did little to address conditions in the leaking mall situation.

Will the minister call the federal occupational health and safety inspectors to investigate the Ministry of Labour's role and recommend whether changes or other actions are warranted?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Speaker, as you know, and as the House knows, the government established the Elliot Lake commission of inquiry. By establishing that public commission, the government has clearly demonstrated its commitment to an independent review of the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall.

The commission is authorized to review the policies, processes and procedures of the provincial government. This includes the policies and procedures of the Ministry of Labour, which were addressed directly in evidence this past week. The government has been providing full and complete co-operation to the commission in fulfilling its mandate and will continue to do so.

The matter of the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall is now before the commission, and the government is of the view that the commission remains the proper forum for examining this issue. It would be inappropriate to comment on any evidence that has been heard by the inquiry, and of course the government looks forward to the commission's recommendations.

VISITOR

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to invite the House to join me in welcoming to the House today a good friend, an activist and an organizer who founded a women's empowerment group and a cultural group that promotes Punjabi culture: Sumeet Kaur Gill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DOUG FINLEY

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thank the Ontario Legislature for the opportunity to pay tribute to Senator Doug Finley, 1946-2013, remembered as the attack dog who won the 2004, 2006 and 2008 federal elections and was a player on the Ontario scene.

Doug's mother-in-law, Muriel Dennis, introduced us 15 years ago. I winned him and dined him at Arby's in Simcoe, and he agreed to come out of retirement to run my 1999 re-election. The boundaries had changed. We had to win Harry and Bob Nixon country.

A ruthless manager and a GOTV technician, we won three provincial awards and changed provincial, municipal and federal campaigns forever. We also got the most votes out for the Jim Flaherty campaign, next to Jim. Doug Finley was the one you wanted working for you, not against you.

A Scottish nationalist, Quebec Liberal operative and one not to suffer fools, Doug was a senior executive at Rolls-Royce Canada in Montreal, president of Standard-Aero, senior VP of Avcorp Industries and CEO of Fernlea Flowers down in Haldimand-Norfolk.

Over the past week, he attended the Senate, frail, but undoubtedly the fire still burned deep—pugnacious and feisty to the end.

My heart goes out to his wife, Diane, human resources minister and Haldimand-Norfolk MP. She knew the softer side of Doug. She knew of his life with a good cigar and that low-flying bird, Famous Grouse.

Thank you, Senator Finley.

ISLAND AIRPORT

Mr. Michael Prue: It was my privilege last night to attend a meeting in the Beach. It was called Jets Over the Beach. It was put together by the local member of

Parliament, Matt Kellway. There were many residents there. The issue is the proposal of allowing jets to fly into Billy Bishop airport on the Island.

There was documentation given out to the people who were in attendance: letters from the Toronto Port Authority that outlined that it is, in fact, their responsibility and the responsibility of Transport Canada as well; and a tripartite agreement with the Toronto Port Authority, the city of Toronto and the airport itself that sets all the stuff.

But there is a role for the province—my reason for speaking here today. The province does appoint an appointee to the Toronto Port Authority, and the province would ultimately be responsible for any environmental assessment, should the airport be expanded to include jets.

The issue for the people in the Beach is primarily one of noise and noise abatement. The Beach is one of the noise-sensitive areas, and flights are not supposed to go over there; if they do, they're not supposed to fly within 2,500 feet. The records of complaints have continued to escalate: an average now of some 272 complaints registered with the Toronto Port Authority per year.

I want to thank Gwen and Gord Fogel, the primary people, because they brought out the fact that there are 17 million visitors to the Beach. Neighbourhoods are at risk, the Leslie Street Spit, the birds and the Toronto Islands. Please, let's be sensitive about this.

M&M MEAT SHOPS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon to recognize the outstanding work of M&M Meat Shops across Ontario and a local business owner in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt.

This past Saturday, I had the honour of assisting in the 25th annual M&M Meat Shops Charity BBQ Day in support of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada, better known as CCFC. This recognized charity is dedicated to finding a cure for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, and improving the lives of children and adults affected by these diseases.

As many of my colleagues here in the Legislature and many Ontarians from across the province are aware, Crohn's and colitis are conditions that affect the gastrointestinal tract. For people with Crohn's and colitis, there are few things as important as finding a cure.

Over the past 25 years, M&M Meat Shops have raised more than \$23 million for medical research dedicated to finding a cure for inflammatory bowel disease.

Dr. Kevin Glasgow, who is the CEO of CCFC, wanted to express his thanks to M&M shops and supporters. He said, "We are extremely grateful to those who support M&M Meat Shops Charity BBQ Day. Our 25-year partnership with M&M Meat Shops has made a" tremendous "difference...."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to end my remarks by thanking Tony Zheng and his amazing team from Scarborough-Agincourt, as well as the Scarborough Lions members for their volunteer work this past Saturday. It was a great

success, and to everyone involved, I want to say thank you and congratulations for this 25th anniversary of barbecue day at M&M.

GUL NAWAZ

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to pay tribute to a true friend, a trusted adviser, a loyal and enthusiastic supporter, a stalwart of his community, an exemplary citizen of Ontario and Canada. Gul Nawaz left behind a legacy of good works, a reputation for honesty and integrity, and a circle of friends that crosses all ethnic, racial, social and political divides.

Gul never stopped until his work was done. That work came to an end on Saturday, May 11, when he responded to his maker's call, from behind his desk, no doubt having argued for one more moment to complete his final transaction. Knowing Gul, that was probably a contribution to one of his many charitable causes, whether his beloved Credit Valley Hospital, the Mississauga Arts Council, the Peel Multicultural Council or—and, Speaker, this speaks to his deep wisdom—the federal and provincial Conservative parties.

I had the pleasure of knowing Gul Nawaz as my friend for more than 25 years. Yesterday, I had the honour of speaking at his funeral service. As I stood before his family and friends, I asked them to do something in honour of Gul. I asked everyone to smile, because there was no one whose smile was more uplifting, more infectious and more sincere. That smile, together with his clear and gentle eyes and encouraging words that never spoke malice of anyone, are what endeared this man to everyone he met.

Untiring in dedication, unwavering in loyalty and uncompromising in his principles, Gul Nawaz will continue to live through the many people he touched and inspired throughout his life. Our thoughts and prayers continue with his wife, Ghazala, his family and his friends, far and wide.

NURSES' AWARDS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am pleased to rise in the Legislature today to acknowledge some local superheroes in scrubs, who were recently recognized for their important work in the field of nursing last week in Essex country.

Elsie Galbraith is among the first honourees. Just days away from retirement, she received Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital's annual Jeanne Mance Nursing Excellence Award. "I'm totally overwhelmed," said Galbraith, who has worked for nearly 40 years at Hôtel-Dieu, most recently in the trauma program.

Three nurses at Leamington District Memorial Hospital also received special recognition on Monday. The three latest Daisy Award winners are Michelle White-Lavadan, Mary Ann Baldwin and Cathie Morrison.

Windsor Regional Hospital presented Margaret (Peggy) Beadow with its lifetime achievement award. Beadow, who has worked as a registered nurse for 50

years, stated, "I always wanted to be a nurse; I went right out of high school."

Nursing Excellence Awards will also be presented to Windsor Regional nurses Shelley Farrand, Mary Sauve, Deborah Archibald, Ruth Wilson and Sukhwinder Saini.

Gerry Carey is also the recipient of the hospital's Global Mitra nursing award, which recognizes a nurse whose work speaks to the hospital's commitment to diversity, and Ena Montelone and Deb Ruston are the hospital's latest Daisy Award recipients.

Sauna Carter, an 11-year veteran of the nursing profession, receives the sixth annual Lois Fairley nursing award, and states, "I'm just overwhelmed with joy." The Lois Fairley award recognizes a local nurse whose work has positively affected the lives of patients or their workplaces.

I want to thank these special members of our community for their dedication to nursing and exemplary service to Essex county.

1510

EDITH HEMINGWAY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak about one of my constituents who recently celebrated her 90th birthday. Edith Mabel Hemingway is an inspiration to all of the people who know her. What is amazing about Edith Mabel Hemingway is that she turned 90 and she's still enjoying her second career working for McDonalds at the Runnymede and Bloor location.

For the past 23 years, right after she retired from her previous career, Edith has been taking the same bus every week to get to work. When she first started to work at McDonalds, she was stationed in the kitchen, but she soon asked to be transferred to the dining room, because she very much enjoys getting to know her customers.

Mrs. Hemingway has worked with dedication and has been committed to other people's well-being throughout her life. During the Second World War, she moved from New Brunswick to Ontario to serve in the army's nursing corps at Sunnybrook Hospital. I was honoured to join Edith Mabel Hemingway, her family, friends and neighbours to celebrate her lifetime accomplishments. She's a wonderful example of work ethics, diligence, energy and joviality, so I would like to wish her a happy birthday from all of us here at the Legislature.

TED BLOWES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I want to remember and pay tribute to Ted Blowes. Ted passed away on Saturday, May 11, at the age of 76.

Ted was an incredibly passionate community leader and volunteer. He was known affectionately around town as "Mr. Stratford" for his tireless work and his giving spirit. Ted was a secondary school teacher for 34 years, retiring as the head of the geography department at Northwestern Secondary School. He was actively

involved in public service, serving six terms on Stratford city council: two as alderman and the last four as mayor.

Ted will be forever remembered as one of Stratford's most prominent volunteers. He was involved with a countless number of organizations, including the Stratford Festival. He founded both the Stratford Citizens for the Environment Club and the Stratford Beautification and Environment Awareness Committee.

Ted has been widely celebrated for his achievements and dedication. He was recognized as the Stratford Rotary Club's Paul Harris Fellow, the city of Stratford's Man of the Year and senior of the year, and is a Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal recipient. On November 5, 2012, I was proud to honour Ted with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He was recognized for his outstanding record of public service and his dedication to environmentalism.

I know that all MPPs will want to join me in sending our condolences to Ted's children, his partner Patricia and his entire family. Ted was an admirable leader and will be remembered for all that he did to make Stratford such a wonderful community.

LOCAL FOOD

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would like to encourage all Ontarians to support our province's local food industry by visiting local farmers' markets and roadside food stands. In my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, there are many of both of these that my constituents and I enjoy attending regularly. Markham alone has three farmers' markets and seven on-farm markets and pick-your-own farms. This includes the Markham Farmers' Market, which opened this past Saturday, Reesor Farm Market and Whittamore's berry farm, which is also famous for its jams and pies.

In fact, Reesor Farm Market, which also operates Reesor Farm Kitchen in Stouffville, has been providing the greater Toronto area with fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables for over 25 years. In the township of King, the King City Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture's Farmer's Market will open on May 23 this year.

Oak Ridges–Markham has a thriving agriculture and food industry. Strawberries, apples, poultry, beef, pork and zucchini are just a small taste of the types of produce and food grown in my great riding. Farmers' markets and food stands present Ontarians with an engaging means to learn about our local food industry and play a role in highlighting the interconnectedness of rural and urban Ontario. I encourage my constituents and colleagues to choose local food and help local economies by going to their local farmers' market or roadside food stand.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Earlier this month, the Yukon passed legislation that would require carbon monoxide detectors in all homes. This follows the tragic deaths last year of five people due to carbon monoxide poisoning. That legislation will save lives.

Here in Ontario, I brought forward a bill to require carbon monoxide detectors. I've introduced it four times. It's passed second reading unanimously three times, it's passed committee unanimously, but it has never been called for third reading.

It's named the Hawkins Gignac Act after a family of four in my riding who died from carbon monoxide poisoning four years ago. We've been working since then to get this bill passed. Over the time we've been debating this bill, Ontarians have had more unnecessary tragedies. Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning.

Last spring, all three parties made an agreement to move forward private members' bills. Our party has been clear: This is one we wanted to move forward. The Premier told the fire chiefs earlier this month that it was something we needed to make happen, but her party has been dragging its feet in making it law. The third party says they support carbon monoxide detectors. Publicly they say the bill should move forward, but now they are part of the problem.

It's time to put aside party issues. It's time to honour our agreement. It's time to move this bill forward to save lives. I ask all parties to commit to unanimous consent so we can finally pass the Hawkins Gignac Act and ensure all Ontarian families have the protection of a carbon monoxide detector.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I rise today to draw our collective attention to the central role public works and infrastructure play in strengthening our economy, creating jobs and building healthy communities in Ontario. From roads, highways and transit systems that take us from work to schools where our children learn and the hospitals where we are cared for; to the parks and recreation centres we all enjoy; to the vital infrastructure we don't see, the water pipes underground and the broadband Internet towers that connect us to the world, public works and infrastructure are the foundation of Ontario.

Our public works partners are the people on the ground, putting our unprecedented investments in Ontario's transportation, communications and public service systems and facilities into action. That is why, on behalf of the new Ontario government, I am pleased to declare next week, May 19 to May 25, 2013, National Public Works Week in Ontario.

I wish to invite all members to join me in acknowledging the thousands of men and women who work within the sector, and to acknowledge in the legislative chamber today representatives in the gallery from the Ontario Public Works Association, including OPWA president Joe Johnson, OPWA directors Michelle Albert and Barry Kelly—if they could just stand, Mr. Speaker—

along with Darla Campbell, executive director of the Ontario Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure, who are all here today to join us.

I would like to take a moment to thank these people, on behalf of our government and the Legislature, and the thousands of dedicated people who work in this sector.

Public works and infrastructure support everything Ontario businesses and families do, and every dollar invested in infrastructure is a dollar invested in economic development, job creation and a high quality of life. That is true for our investments in colleges and universities, hospitals, schools, transit, roads, highways, sewers and clean water systems.

In fact, the Conference Board of Canada recently found that each \$100 million of public infrastructure investment in Ontario boosts our province's GDP by \$114 million, particularly in the construction and manufacturing sectors. That's why Ontario has invested an unprecedented \$85 billion in public infrastructure since 2003.

Two years ago, we released Ontario's long-term infrastructure plan, known as Building Together. In both this plan and the 2012 budget, we committed to invest more than \$35 billion in infrastructure over the next three years. Once again in the 2013 budget, we are committing to invest more than \$35 billion in infrastructure, including almost \$13.5 billion in 2013-14 alone. These investments are expected to support over 100,000 jobs on average each year going forward.

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This past August we announced the Municipal Infrastructure Strategy, which includes nearly \$90 million to address critical municipal infrastructure projects. At the end of April, we announced plans to create a fund of \$100 million for this year to help small rural and northern municipalities build roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. Funds will be made available in this program by October 1 of this year.

At the same time, the government will consult on the components of a permanent program for roads and bridges and other critical infrastructure investments in small and rural municipalities for the 2014 budget. This fund will be in addition to the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative.

Our strategic approach to municipal infrastructure is paying off. These investments have helped municipalities modernize their infrastructure and create jobs to strengthen their local economies.

Our commitment to improving and maintaining transportation infrastructure has meant more than \$17 billion in investments to design, repair and expand highways and bridges across the province.

Since 2003, we have invested more than \$16.1 billion in public transit in Ontario, including more than \$7.7 billion in GO Transit alone. In addition to this, we've committed \$8.4 billion for light rapid transit in Toronto and almost \$1 billion for light rapid transit in Ottawa and the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

Finally, our provincial agency, Infrastructure Ontario, remains a global leader in innovative procurement, financing and project management. IO is managing 83 capital projects for the Ontario government using our alternative financing and procurement model, worth approximately \$38 billion in capital construction costs, with value-for-money savings of \$3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is leading a once-in-a-generation rebuild. Every step of the way we will depend on the skills and knowledge of those employed in public works. Now more than ever we need to work together with our public works stakeholders to get the most value possible for these investments while strengthening the economy and supporting jobs.

Ontario's public works and construction sectors are amongst the best in the world, and on behalf of all Ontarians we salute and thank them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to our guests in the gallery who represent these rather fine men and women, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to recognize the contribution to our quality of life by the many public works practitioners employed by federal, provincial and municipal governments, consulting engineers, utility companies, contractors and suppliers throughout Ontario and Canada.

Throughout this year's National Public Works Week, from May 19 to May 25, the focus will be on the men and women who provide leadership on the important issues of public works and the underlying infrastructure we all too often take for granted. Whether hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, transit or energy and water systems, none would exist without the professional knowledge, the innovation and management expertise of the many professionals engaged in the public works sector.

In that context, I want to recognize the work of the Ontario Public Works Association and express our appreciation for their commitment to promoting professional excellence and public awareness through education, advocacy and the exchange of knowledge regarding public works in Ontario. Their working relationship with organizations such as the Ontario Good Roads Association, the Ontario Water Works Association, the Municipal Engineers Association and the Water Environment Association of Ontario has ensured ongoing consultations on best practices, on issues ranging from planning to construction and maintenance of our public works.

I also want to acknowledge other important partners in public works in this province, such as the Consulting Engineers of Ontario, the Professional Engineers Ontario, the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists, and the Ontario chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America. To the professionals who comprise the memberships of these organizations, we say thank you for the contributions you make to our communities, to our province and to our country.

This year's public works theme is most appropriate: "Because of Public Works...." Speaker, when we think of those words, the rest follows logically. Pretty well any major structure we see throughout our community that gives us the quality of life that we enjoy in this great province completes that sentence:

—our schools, universities and libraries that form the basis of learning;

—our hospitals and long-term-care homes that provide the security of our health care and social services;

—our roads, highways, bridges and transit that connect our neighbourhoods and facilitate the social and economic activity that makes our province great; and

—our municipal utilities that deliver reliable energy and safe water supplies that we so often take for granted.

We have much to celebrate during this National Public Works Week, and we welcome those who are representing this great sector to our Legislature this afternoon.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up to acknowledge the important work of public works and to acknowledge that next week is National Public Works Week in Ontario. Certainly, it's a valuable opportunity to acknowledge the thousands of men and women who build and maintain our infrastructure and keep Ontario competitive.

It's also a pleasure this week to recognize the essential role played by the dedicated men and women who contribute to public works and infrastructure across this great province. Those who serve the public contribute a great deal to our progress towards building vibrant communities and strong local economies. We see examples of this all over Ontario—from transportation systems and schools to recreational facilities, public workers have a huge impact on the quality of life for all Ontarians. For this reason, it is essentially important that Ontario's government brings more accountability to public works projects, especially in light of the consistent and seemingly constant attacks on their integrity, collective bargaining rights and working conditions.

In good and bad times, people need to know that public dollars are being managed responsibly and well. It is essential that the role of public works employees is respected and defended by those in a position to do so, and we are in that position.

Public works employees need to be able to trust their government to protect the integrity of their employment and to provide them with the right to contribute to decisions being made regarding their future.

Ontario public works employees should be protected by the people elected to represent them. They do not deserve to have any job stability stripped away to create a more so-called flexible labour market, one of the strategies put forward by the Ontario PCs.

Public works is an area where government accountability is important. We need to see employees treated fairly, spending taken on responsibly and public needs responded to promptly. We need to move ahead with clear plans for public works across this province.

We also need to understand that cutting public works results in service reductions. For example, the people of

Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph have waited years for Highway 7 upgrades and redevelopment. For years, residents in both regions have expressed and experienced growing safety concerns, and certainly there has been a negative effect on the local economies. Residents are clearly looking forward to the start of this project in 2015 after decades of consideration.

Clear plans to maintain bridges and roads, build recreational spaces, education centres and communication systems—New Democrats want to see plans that are transparent, accountable and fair.

There is such an opportunity within public works to create steady jobs and prosperous communities. We are committed to ensuring that the public works sector is a major player in the recovery of this economy and this province.

PETITIONS

FISHING REGULATIONS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm very honoured to be able to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

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"Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years' quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to the petition. I'll send it to the table with page Samantha.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a healthy connection to our food system is vital to the health and environmental, social and economic well-being of all people in Ontario;

"Whereas too many young people in Ontario do not have access to nutritious food and grow up without basic food literacy or food skills;

"Whereas food bank use in Ontario is at an all-time high and over 412,000 individuals every month cannot afford to feed themselves or their families;

"Whereas poor diet and a lack of access to nutritious foods is a leading cause of poor health and growing health care costs in our province;

"Whereas urban sprawl and poor planning continue to destroy valuable farmland, water resources and local food systems;

"Whereas sustained investment in local food and increased support for Ontario-grown foods will strengthen our food and farming sector and create jobs in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That this government strengthen the Local Food Act as part of a broader provincial strategy to put food first;

"That this government develop a provincial strategy that recognizes the importance of food to our environment, health and social and economic well-being."

Speaker, I agree with this. I will sign it and give it to page Karinna.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: It's a pleasure to stand up and read the following petition, which is titled Grandparents' Rights:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents as requested in Bill 48 put forward by" the member from Niagara Falls; "and

"Whereas currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may apply to a court for certain orders respecting custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order; and

"Whereas currently subclause 24(2)(a)(i) of the act provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody of or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subclause specifies that this includes grandparents; and

"Whereas relationships between children and grandparents are a special bond that should be maintained;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

Since I'm on my feet, point of order, Speaker?

Mr. Frank Klees: You can't do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craitor: See? I can do it. Nice try.

Mr. Speaker, very quickly, I just want to introduce the students from Notre Dame school from my riding of Niagara Falls.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: There's nobody up there.

Mr. Kim Craitor: They're gone now, but they were there just a second ago.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition and give it to page Jack.

UTILITY TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) is legal on schedule 2 highways in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas many residents of Ontario have switched to utility transportation vehicles (UTV); and

"Whereas the use of UTVs in schedule C of the Highway Traffic Act is allowed north of areas in far northern Ontario and unorganized territory...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of Transportation to enact legislation to allow the use of UTVs on class 2 highways throughout northern Ontario."

I fully agree, sign my signature and give it to page Brendan.

JOB RELOCATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: "Fairness to Orléans.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government has already moved approximately 4,700 RCMP employees from the downtown Ottawa to Barrhaven;

"Whereas the federal government is in the process of moving 10,000 DND employees from the downtown of Ottawa to the former Nortel campus near Kanata;

"Whereas the DND has provided information that there are approximately 4,600 DND personnel presently living in Orléans;

"Whereas the city of Ottawa estimates that each permanent job attracts another 1.5 jobs;

"Whereas this move is contrary to the city's goals of sustainable and balanced development;

"Whereas the action by the Conservative government has contributed to the reduction of new home starts in Orléans by 24% and increased home starts in Kanata by 22% from 2011 to 2012;

"Whereas this action by the Conservative government has decreased the average home value in Orléans by \$24,000 and in Gloucester by \$38,000 while all other parts of the city show an increase;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario intervene in this action and request the city of Ottawa to carry out a socio-economic study to evaluate the impacts on the communities of Ottawa, Orléans."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and submit it with Brigid.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning major changes to services provided by OHIP for physiotherapists as of August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas this will dramatically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

"Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year; and

"Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

"Whereas under these changes scheduled for August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

"Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the de-listing of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not proceed and that the provincial government guarantee there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and all those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Anjali.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Joseph's Health Care centre has decided to close its less than 15 year old community hydrotherapy pool on June 28/13. Hundreds of people in pain will be denied this imperative therapy which has been specifically ordered by their physicians and physiotherapists. There is no other affordable pool in the area with three depth levels, salt water at least 92 degrees F with excellent accessibility and hydrotherapy leadership. This decision is in opposition to the statements of the health minister to increase health dollars in the community for physiotherapy and for seniors. Pool patrons' requests to work with St. Joseph's to continue this program have been ignored. The sacrificial work of fundraising to build the pool is being ignored.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask you to direct St. Joseph's Health Care centre to continue its hydrotherapy program in this excellent, appropriate pool. This decision will save huge amounts of health dollars both now and in the future."

I sign my name to this petition and give it to page Jack to deliver.

TRANSFERT D'EMPLOIS

M. Phil McNeely: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral a déjà transféré quelque 4 700 employés de la GRC du centre-ville d'Ottawa à Barrhaven;

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral se prépare à transférer 10 000 employés du MDN du centre-ville d'Ottawa à l'ancien campus Nortel près de Kanata;

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« Attendu que le MDN a indiqué qu'environ 4 600 employés du MDN résident actuellement à Orléans;

« Attendu que la ville d'Ottawa estime que chaque emploi permanent attire 1,5 emploi;

« Attendu que ce transfert d'emploi est contraire aux objectifs de la ville visant le développement durable et équilibré;

« Attendu que l'action du gouvernement conservateur a réduit les mises en chantier de maisons à Orléans de 24 % et a augmenté les nouveaux chantiers à Kanata de 22 % entre 2011 et 2012;

« Attendu que cette action du gouvernement conservateur a contribué à la réduction de la valeur moyenne des maisons à Orléans de 24 000 \$ et à Gloucester de 38 000 \$ alors que partout ailleurs à Ottawa, on marque une augmentation de la valeur immobilière;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que la province de l'Ontario intervienne dans cette action et demande à la ville d'Ottawa de mener à bien une étude socio-économique pour évaluer les impacts de telles décisions sur les communautés d'Ottawa, Orléans. »

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to the ophthalmology funding for physician services and diagnostic testing, retroactive to April 1, 2012; and

"Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care system."

I will pass this off to Madison.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

I agree. I'm going to sign it and give it to Benjamin to deliver—

LAND USE PLANNING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further petitions? The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I was concerned there that we wouldn't make the clock, but we obviously have. Thank you.

This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas municipalities are required to produce official plans that are compliant with the Places to Grow Act and the provincial growth plan; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario prescribes population growth and intensification targets through the provincial growth plan that must be met by municipalities; and

"Whereas even if the designated growth and intensification numbers are met, they are deemed to be minimum numbers; and

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board may approve densities to be located in areas not identified in the official plan, resulting in significant additional costs to the municipality because of required changes to long-term infrastructure plans, and also disrupts the character of existing communities;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

"(1) The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space.

"(2) The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality."

I affix my signature to this petition and, given that it is my private member's bill, I will do everything I can to ensure that this place processes that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions is over. Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I notice on my copy of orders of the day, we have spent 15 hours and 36 minutes of accumulated time debating Bill 14 here in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I think it's time that it comes to an end, and I hope that you'll bear some indulgence as I relate a little story—I hear applause behind me—that has to do with, ultimately, politicians.

Four surgeons are meeting at a surgical convention. The first one is from New York, and he says, "When I'm in the operating theatre, I love operating on accountants." The others say, "Why?" and he says, "Well, when I open them up, everything is numbered." The second surgeon, who is a young woman from Chicago, says, "For me, electricians are the best people to operate on, because when you open them up, everything is colour-coded." The third surgeon comes from Los Angeles, and he says, "I like librarians. When you open them up, everything is coded according to the Dewey decimal system." The final surgeon is somebody from Washington—I could say Ottawa—and he says, "I like operating on politicians." The other three say, "Why politicians?" and he says, "Well, they have no spine, they have no guts, they have no gonads and they have no brains, plus one end is interchangeable with the other."

I'm a politician, and we're all politicians in here, and this bill is very much a bill that was designed for politicians and has been the subject of political games. So forgive me the attempt at humour, but I had to say that. I'm glad that it's coming to an end, because there were

over 100 pieces of legislation that died when the McGuinty government shut down the Legislature on October 15, 2012—just disappeared—and there are people, many people, because we exist on behalf of people, who were injured by the fact that legislation either disappeared or was severely delayed. This was an aspect of it. It's not that hard of a bill. This government put their own interests ahead of getting on with the job and helping those people. The previous version of this bill, which was then numbered Bill 65, died on the order paper when the McGuinty government prorogued the House, and here it is back as Bill 14.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada's Ontario region represents about 555 non-profit housing co-operatives, home to about 125,000 people across the province, several thousand of them living in my own riding of Thornhill, just north of Toronto. There are 156,000 households on a wait-list to access affordable housing, and again I have to say people think, "Oh, look at Shurman. He comes from Thornhill, rich suburb; York region, rich area." No, we're not any richer than anywhere else as a region or as a particular riding. We are in the same boat as everybody else. We have a long wait-list—in some cases, people have been sitting on it for 10 years—looking for affordable housing in York region.

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We have Ontarians on wait-lists that basically run like molasses in January, so we have to do what we can to facilitate, and Bill 14 is just one of those ways. Most households that were housed in 2011 were on waiting lists for an average between two and four years to be placed, but some did indeed wait 10 years, and in some cases more than 10 years. That's a very long time. That's a time—and I could cite examples of it, and I make no light of this—where you get on the wait-list and you die before you actually get placed.

Vacancy rates across the province, particularly in urban centres, have really tightened, with the provincial average now at 2.9%. This makes it even more difficult for people to find affordable housing. Affordable housing, once it's found, is something that you treasure; disputes are something that you want to put aside. One in five Ontario renter households are spending more than half of their income on housing. There's a growing gap in the incomes of tenants and homeowners. Median tenant incomes have actually declined by \$5,000 over the last 20 years, from \$41,000 to \$36,000, which aggravates the problem even further.

We are in a challenging economic situation that has been hampered by the McGuinty-Wynne record of sky-high spending and a record deficit. We have a credible plan to get our finances in order so that jobs can be created and Ontario's economy can thrive again.

The broken dispute resolution system also clogs up our courts. This costs all Ontarians time and money, and that's what this bill purports to fix. We tend to agree that with a little bit of modification in committee, that's exactly what it's going to do. The Landlord and Tenant

Board dispute resolution process needs to be streamlined. The cost of hearing and resolving these disputes in the courts is currently estimated to be as much as \$5,000 on each side—money that needn't be spent, or at least not in that degree.

Bill 14 has one big area of concern in its current form: It would waive the \$45 registration fee for low-income applicants. Forty-five dollars is a very significant cost for some applicants. Most of us in this place will say, "I don't want to part with 45 bucks," but they reach in their pockets and that's 45 bucks—if you're at the low-income end, \$45 can represent what you're going to eat or if you're going to eat in any particular week. So we can't make light of it, and \$45 enters into this bill as a prime aspect of it. However, waiving this fee would increase applications to the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board, and this would only cause further delays at the OLTB. Who are we helping, then? Do we really need another layer of complication to further the delay for people?

We think that there is a modicum of good ideology behind this bill. We think that it can be resolved. We think that it deserves to go to committee. We think that, with a pending vote, it will go to committee, and we hope that it will come back and be passed. Let's get this bill to committee so that it can be fixed to address this and any other issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Maybe it's a sign of spring, but I'm feeling hopeful and optimistic that we're going to end this debate today. Harvey Cooper and friends: I feel like I've barely had a chance to get to know you, but I'm going to miss seeing you around here. Thank you for being here. We'll see you soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm feeling quite hopeful too, because I think Bill 14 is a bill whose time has come, and it appears that time may be this afternoon. It's time to move on, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I, too, would like to join with my colleagues and thank the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada for being here. I think we all owe them a big round of applause for their advocacy, but most of all for their patience.

I hope you guys aren't going to prorogue on them again. You did that the last time. Don't do it now. Let's get this bill into committee.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Don't get all upset about it. Come on now. We're going to let debate collapse today.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: See how excited we are?

Anyway, I look forward to seeing you all in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Apart from all the partisan nonsense—Harvey, all of you, thank you for the incredible work you do day in, day out. Thank you, and please extend our thanks to all who have been active around this bill. We're so thankful it's going to end today and get to committee. We're so happy that you'll finally, finally get it passed. Thank you, again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I bow in the direction of Harvey Cooper et al. I know you're happy about this; you should be. Congratulations in advance because I know that it will work its way through committee.

Let me also say thank you to—actually she didn't speak, but let me say thank you to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for the very, very clear and concise hand signals that she sent. Maybe next time build a little fire on your desk; we can make it smoke signals.

Also the members for Davenport, for Oakville, for Leeds–Grenville—who else spoke?—Parkdale–High Park. Those four members for adding their voices to this—I know that they share all of our interests in seeing this bill now move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mario Sergio: No, no.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): What committee?

Hon. Mario Sergio: To the Legislative Assembly committee, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay. Orders of the day?

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les
aliments locaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 36 on behalf of my constituents in Whitby–Oshawa. While my riding is predominantly urban, we're also blessed to have a significant rural component, home

to a number of local food producers. So getting this bill right is important to me and certainly important to my constituents in Whitby–Oshawa, as it should be important to all Ontarians no matter where they might live.

In short, the PC caucus is certainly supportive of this bill's spirit. We're happy that the McGuinty-Wynne government at least recognizes the importance of Ontario's rural communities and industries to the sustainability and success of the province.

However, like most Liberal bills, the Local Food Act is lacking any substance whatsoever. It does little to nothing to deal with the true issues and barriers facing Ontario's agricultural industries today. The Liberals could have worked across the aisle to develop a substantive bill to genuinely aid Ontario's agricultural industries, but, once again, we see that this government is having a one-way conversation.

This bill could have addressed a number of pressing issues, and these are issues that all of us, as members, have heard from our local agricultural producers: things like the maze of red tape and regulation faced by Ontario's agricultural industries; the impact of skyrocketing hydro bills on Ontario's farmers and small businesses; and additional fees that, courtesy of the Liberals, continue to make life more and more difficult for small businesses, like eco fees on tires, which particularly hurt farmers who have to buy industrial grade tires for their equipment. I know that many members of my caucus, the PC caucus—my colleagues—have talked about this as a particular issue affecting farmers in their ridings.

So instead of dealing with these major issues, the bill's content merely nods to Ontario's agricultural industry.

1600

For instance, it provides that the minister may establish goals or targets to aspire to with respect to local food, and it provides that the minister may direct a public sector organization to provide information regarding local food targets. In other words, a major portion of this bill is merely a plan to establish a plan. How typical.

Well, I can tell you that the people in Ontario are tired of talk, and we in the PC caucus are tired of empty legislation that fails to deal with the root causes of Ontario's economic woes; and heaven knows, there are many these days. We're sitting at a situation where we've got 500,000-plus people who don't have a job. We've got a deficit of about \$12 billion and growing.

It's okay to dedicate a week to local food. We in Whitby–Oshawa have a phenomenal local farmers' market in Brooklin, in Whitby, that features Durham region's food growers. However, government isn't just meant to cover up bad policy with another commemorative week. There's so much more to be done.

We should strive to develop legislation that truly tackles the issues and barriers that face Ontario's food growers. We should work diligently to create a jurisdiction that has the best conditions in North America for small businesses, including Ontario's agricultural producers. That should be the target for us at Queen's Park,

and this bill, in its proposed form, has failed to achieve that.

Madam Speaker, we've heard from hundreds of farmers about the challenges they're facing, and we've heard from hundreds of agriculture and local food organizations who have submitted proposals for this bill which have been ignored in favour of a bill that has no substance.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the hard work of the member for Oxford, who has been listening carefully to ideas from stakeholders and engaging with them. Based on his consultations, the member for Oxford has developed practical solutions outlined in his white paper on agriculture, food and rural affairs called *Paths to Prosperity: Respect for Rural Ontario*.

One group of active stakeholders wrote to the Premier in response to her Local Food Act. These stakeholders include the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, FoodShare, Sustain Ontario, Loblaw, Food Forward, Toronto Food Policy Council, Holland Marsh Growers' Association, the Organic Council of Ontario, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, and Ontario Farm Fresh. They write, "We ... feel that the Local Food Act can and should do more than promote awareness and strive to improve procurement. We believe the key to really accomplishing the goals of stronger food systems in Ontario lies in improving the basic food literacy of all Ontarians."

They also write that "a Local Food Act should also address the very fundamental issue of food access—the ability of all Ontarians to procure nutritious and culturally acceptable food at all times...."

These stakeholders tell us that, "A well-crafted Local Food Act will help strengthen Ontario's food and agricultural sector...." But what we've heard here in this bill is not well crafted. It does nothing but leave these stakeholders hoping for something more substantial.

The government should look to the Ontario PC white paper on agriculture, food and rural affairs for concrete proposals to bolster agriculture and local food in Ontario. There, they will find that we, as PCs, have addressed what farmers have identified as their number one issue; that is, red tape and government paperwork, an issue we've addressed on several different occasions, including our white paper on economic development, *An Agenda for Growth*.

Farmers say that they spend far too much time filling out paperwork at the expense of working on their fields and innovating their processes and techniques to deliver better results. To make matters worse, in our agricultural survey last summer, 77% of farmers told us that red tape is not decreasing but increasing, but absolutely nothing in Bill 36 addresses the regulatory burden that our farmers, agribusinesses and food processors are facing.

The member for Oxford has put forward constructive ideas to tackle this challenge, and we should be listening to him.

For instance, we would propose to review licences, permits and certificates to see which ones could be

combined and which ones should be eliminated. The PC white paper also suggests: (1) creating a regional food terminal, (2) implementing a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses and (3) a dedicated fund for the Risk Management Program.

With government bills doing little to facilitate on-the-ground action, it makes me particularly proud to see the fantastic new initiatives in the areas of food and agriculture in my own riding, and I'd like to spend just a moment speaking about that. Durham College, in both Whitby and Oshawa, is building a new 36,000-square-foot building at its Whitby campus with a brand new Centre for Food. The facilities will accommodate 900 new students and house culinary, hospitality, tourism, agricultural and horticultural programs. Through this program, students will learn about local food and the farming industry. They will be the farmers, food processors and vendors of tomorrow in Ontario.

This program will be at the cutting edge of innovative, sustainable food and farming technology. Chef Jamie Kennedy has spoken enthusiastically about the Centre for Food. He commented that "the Centre for Food has been designed to create a unique learning environment for students, which captures the spirit, innovation and progressiveness of the local food movement. I know this centre will attract students from across this country as they learn about growing, harvesting and preparing food." I'm certainly proud to see this focus on sustainable local food in my own riding, and I'm disappointed that this progress at Durham College stands in such stark contrast to the empty bill proposed by the government.

The people of Ontario want to buy local food. Over 80% of shoppers intend to purchase Ontario fresh food and believe it is fresher and of better quality. Why isn't this government building on the momentum by tackling areas that farmers are truly concerned about to enhance agriculture and local food?

The PCs are committed to working with stakeholder groups, processors and farmers, academic institutions and future growers to put forward amendments that will address some of the issues in Bill 36. We believe in the importance of local food and supporting farmers. That's why we want a real food act for Ontario, one that will truly deal with the underlying conditions that negatively impact local food producers, rather than just paying lip service to this vital industry.

So I'll certainly close with endorsing a Local Food Act that truly means something, and I hope that, as we discuss this bill, we will get to that in the course of our discussions and once it gets into committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour for me to be able to speak on agriculture in Ontario and to follow the remarks from the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

She makes some very good points about the vagueness of the act. The purpose of the act, as it now stands, is to set out the goals and objectives over three years—if it's

passed into law—after it's passed into law. It just doesn't make sense. If we're going to set out the goals and objectives, there should at least be a framework of how you're going to do it or what you're going to do with those goals and objectives.

That isn't in the Local Food Act now, and that's something that—and I'm hoping it goes to committee. That's something that we should be able to change, to actually give it a purpose, because the farmers, the processors, the retailers and the consumers deserve that. If we're going to spend the time and the money that it costs to do these things, to debate these things, to change laws, we should at least, at the very minimum, ensure that what we're doing has a purpose and has a real one.

As we've said so many times in this House, on this side, this act is in essence not a whole lot more than a press release, and that's a disservice. That's a disservice not only to the people in this House but to the people across the province. So it's time that this act, the Local Food Act—that we push it through to committee where the stakeholders can actually make amendments, help us make amendments to make this worthy.

I have a processor in Cochrane who makes sausages, and due to some of our extra red tape—not due to safety concerns but due to specific red tape—can't get those sausages into some retail places. That's something that we should address with an act like this, and hopefully we will get the chance to do so.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? Minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I just wanted to stand today in support of Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I hope we can move it along here today and bring it past second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few comments, and I appreciate the member for Whitby-Oshawa. The one thing I didn't get a chance to mention when I had my rotation in debate was a conversation our agriculture critic had prior to the presentation and the introduction of this bill. It was a conversation he had with the Minister of Rural Affairs.

The minister had given him an indication that a previous bill from our caucus, actually from my predecessor, now-Senator Runciman, tabled in 2008 regarding a liquor licence amendment to allow fruit wine sales at farmers' markets—the minister alluded to the fact that it would be included in the Local Food Act, and it wasn't. So we were a bit surprised.

I hope that when the bill does get to committee, we will find out the great mystery of why this section wasn't included. It was a bill, as I said, that was introduced by Mr. Runciman in November 2008 and that received second reading in December 2008. There was a decision among the House leaders to actually put this bill before the committee; in fact, a number of Liberal members spoke in favour of the concept of having fruit wines sold at farmers' markets.

Then, to everyone's surprise, even after the House leaders decided that the bill wouldn't die on the order paper and would be carried over, when the bill was being debated—I'm checking Hansard; the member for Dufferin—Caledon was there—to all of our surprise, the Liberal members voted against it. In fact, the member for Oxford told me they even voted against the title of the bill. So I hope this great mystery of fruit wines in farmers' markets—why that concept wasn't included in the Local Food Act. I'm confident the government members will stop the mystery and tell me what happened.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm pleased to stand up and talk about the Local Food Act, because I'm really proud that the New Democrats have proposed suggestions to "buy Ontario." When we're talking about local food, we should be promoting buying Ontario local food. That makes a lot of sense and supports our local businesses.

I wanted to read: in April 2009, the McGuinty government proposed "\$24 million ... to develop the logistics to get more Ontario-grown food into the province's schools, hospitals, food service companies and other institutions," but to date, the money hasn't been allocated.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Good idea; no accountability.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Absolutely, no accountability. That was where I was going with that, actually, so thanks for the lead-in.

Here we are again: a good idea, where you have a Local Food Act, and we're saying, "Let's promote local business. Let's buy Ontario and create new jobs." This government, in 2009, made a promise to allocate money to that type of program, but we have yet to see those results. We have yet to see that promise come to fruition.

When we're talking today in the House about local food, I think we need to make sure we think about accountability. The things we say when we make promises through a bill, we need to deliver. That's why New Democrats have said this government needs to be held accountable in many ways, including delivering results to Ontarians through the budget and to local food.

We shouldn't forget, when we allocate funds to programs to make sure we support our Ontario economy with local food, that we need to see those funds come to light and make sure we're accountable to the people of Ontario when we make promises.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the member from Leeds—Grenville and the member from London—Fanshawe for their comments.

I think that, at the end of the day, what we end up with, with Bill 36 in its present form, is really a great opportunity. We have a great opportunity here to talk about the great products we have here in Ontario, to

celebrate them and to use them, and we should be supporting our farmers and our agricultural producers to be able to reach their full potential.

I say that for a couple of reasons. One is, just in terms of the health of our population here in Ontario, we should be eating as much local food as possible. It's healthier; it should be less expensive. We need to teach people how to use it; there are lots of cooking opportunities.

I actually personally believe we should bring home economics back into the classroom, because it was a basic program that worked. We learned about the food guide; we learned about nutrition. I think we should be bringing that back. We should be talking about things like that.

In the context of our discussion on Bill 36, we should be looking at this as a great economic driver. We have hundreds of thousands of people out of work. Agriculture has long been one of the backbones in our economy. We should be supporting agriculture and supporting agribusiness as well, which is the value added, so that we can continue to employ people and make it worthwhile for many people who are struggling on family farms right now, who are being tied up with red tape and regulation. We want family farms to pass from successive generations to keep that land in production and be able to continue to have a sustainable food supply here in Ontario. It's important to generations of Ontario families.

We have a proud history of agriculture here. We need to support that so we need to get this bill—get some teeth into it; get some meaning into it; and really make it into a bill that will really support our farmers. So I would urge the government to proceed on that basis.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the request has been made that second reading of Bill 36 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, May 15.

Second reading vote deferred.

STRONGER PROTECTION
FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT
LA PROTECTION
DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi*

55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to join in the debate on Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. I always welcome the chance to talk about consumer protection. Ladies and gentlemen, let's face it; I think we would all agree that the more we can do as provincial legislators to protect people from being ripped off by unscrupulous business practices, the better off. So I appreciate the opportunity.

Bill 55, the particular bill that we're debating this afternoon, is an attempt by the government to shore up consumer protection in the province by amending three pieces of legislation: the Consumer Protection Act, by providing a cooling-off period for people who have purchased a water heater from a salesperson at their door; the Collection Agencies Act, to set out some new operating procedures for debt settlement services; and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, to remove the restriction against charging a fee and a commission for buying or selling a house.

There are some worthwhile steps being taken in this bill. While there are some areas of concern and places where I think we'd be looking to bring forward some amendments, it's definitely something that I personally would like to see come before committee. Certainly as MPPs, our constituency offices hear from people day after day who've been taken advantage of, whether it's from a high-pressure salesperson at their door or a deal that hasn't lived up to what was promised.

1620

When I talk about constituency offices, I worked at a constituency for my predecessor, and although this bill doesn't deal with it, I quite vividly remember calls, almost on a weekly basis, about energy retailers who would sign someone up at the door with a gas retailing contract—only to find at a later date that the contract wasn't basically what was promised at the door.

I told the story when I had a two-minute hit on a previous speaker about the fact that I live very close to the 401, and quite often travelling salespeople will stop at the end of our street in Brockville and sort of canvass our street. So it's quite common that I would have a salesperson at my door. A couple of Fridays ago, on Friday night, the doorbell rang. I went out, and there were two young lads at the door. I looked at them, and I said, "Hey, you're hot water heater salesmen." They were quite surprised. They said, "How do you know?" And I said, "Well, I'm a member of provincial Parliament, and we actually have a bill in front of us to deal with some of your business practices."

They were quite shocked that there was a bill before the Legislature that would deal with their sales practices. In fact, it was funny: I couldn't then get them to turn that

clipboard over so I could see what company they worked for. But they were very nice and thanked me for my interaction with them, and off they went rather quickly down the street.

I have to say that I haven't had any people knock at my door since then. I don't know if I've got a little X on the house or something. Anyway, I thought I was a nice guy at the door, just telling them what was going on here in the Legislative Assembly.

When we talk about high-pressure sales tactics, I think Ontarians could stand to have some protection from the government opposite. They certainly like to engage in a tireless sales pitch, and I also think they engage in some false advertising. They do a great job writing the titles of these bills, putting them out in the media, using their spin, trying to make it sound like these bills are solving all the world's problems. Let's face it: This bill, the Local Food Act or the Ambulance Amendment Act don't actually do everything the government claims. In some cases, they don't do anything, and in other cases, like Bill 55, which we're debating this afternoon, they do very little. Bill 55 puts in place some good steps, but ultimately, anyone who thinks it's the final word on consumer protection is in for a very, very rude awakening.

Back to the title of this bill, I think I'm going to introduce my own private member's bill inspired by the Liberal government. I'm going to call it the Don't Judge a Bill by its Title Act. It's going to require that the government actually write a bill where the contents match the title. This Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act is just the latest from this government with a wonderful title that just doesn't hold up when you look at what actually is in it. But I have to concede that it's not the worst example from this government. The honour has to go to the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2013. That's the budget bill.

While so many government bills don't actually do what their titles promise, which I think is bad enough, this bill actually does the opposite. If we allow this government's budget bill to pass, we'll be creating a less prosperous and a less fair Ontario. I'd like to see the finance minister explain to me how he thinks Ontario is going to prosper when this budget actually increases the deficit, thanks to the unconscionable decision to jack up spending by \$3.6 billion. And how are we creating prosperity by continuing a trend that has seen the Ontario debt double during 10 years of Liberal mismanagement. The fact is we aren't creating a more prosperous province, because everyone knows you can't spend your way to prosperity. If we could, those—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I believe we're speaking about Bill 55.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes. I will remind the member. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just got carried away because of the title of that act. It just drives me crazy when you put a title in there and it doesn't live up to what's billed.

I may get back to some of that fairness later on in my speech, Speaker. I may ask your indulgence later. I know the minister is quite anxious to hear me talk about consumer protection.

There is an example that the minister is aware of, and it's from Kathleen Dickenson, who is a resident of Kemptville and who wrote to me about consumer protection. Although I'm going to quote some of her letter, I'm not going to mention others because there is a mention of a company and a file number for the OPP report. I'm going to be cautious with how I present this. She wrote to me and she says, "I'm writing to advise you of an incredible situation I find myself in, abandoned by a system that should protect innocent homeowners."

"An individual came door to door Tuesday providing estimates for driveway repaving in my Kemptville, Ontario, neighbourhood. He gave me a verbal estimate and his business card, and asked me to let him know if I was interested, as he was working on several other driveways in my area." It mentions his business card.

She later on in the letter says, "My husband came home from work on Thursday (approximately 3 p.m.) to find this individual working on our driveway. He had ripped out the interlock bricks in front of our door, removed asphalt at the edge of the paved section of our driveway and at the street, removed gravel and dirt to bring the level down below our concrete garage pad etc."

"When my husband confronted him, he claimed I had agreed to the work. My husband asked him to leave. I came directly home from work and contacted the police."

Later on in the letter it talks about the OPP bringing the individual there, and ultimately they deemed it was a civil matter.

At the time she filed a claim with her house insurance, and the claim at the time was denied. The reason provided was that her policy didn't cover faulty construction work.

She says, "Although I consider this destruction of property, without criminal charges, my insurance will not help me."

"The responsible individual has indicated that he has only been in Canada for a few weeks, and was in the paving business in Ireland for 25 years."

"He has offered some minimal work, at no cost, to correct his alleged mistake, but I have no confidence in the quality of any work that he may do."

"I'm completely incredulous that someone can destroy my property with no request to do so whatsoever, and that I am then bound by a pass-the-buck criminal and insurance system to either pay out of pocket to fix the destruction and seek restitution in Small Claims Court, or have potentially inferior work forced on me by the responsible individual, with absolutely no assurance of quality workmanship."

Then she goes on to say, "Please tell me what the government of Canada is doing to protect innocent homeowners, who are taxpayers, Canadian citizens and federal public servants, from being preyed upon in such egregious ways?"

So here is a homeowner who has done all the things right. She senses something is not right, she refuses to sign an agreement for this guy to do any work, and without her consent he shows up when she's away and starts doing it anyway. Fortunately, I can update the story to say that after my office and the media got involved and with some further inquiries by Ms. Dickenson, her insurance company has stepped up, so I'm glad about that.

You may be asking, though, what was the ministry's response to all of this? The day after I spoke to the minister—and I'm sure this was a coincidence, Speaker; I'm sure it has to be a coincidence—the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell had one of those famous planted questions during question period. Here's how he led it off: "My question is to the dedicated Minister of Consumer Services. Spring has finally arrived, and many homeowners are thinking about possible renovations that they might want to do to their homes. Renovations and small construction projects are great ways to stimulate the local economies and also tend to employ locals, and people buy materials locally."

Of course, the minister did offer all kinds of assurances that her ministry has lots of information for consumers—information for consumers. No protection, mind you, just lots and lots of information.

It's ironic that even when a planted question is asked, the minister didn't really have any answers that could truly help someone in Ms. Dickenson's situation.

To close out the story—actually, last week my office got an answer from the ministry, and it really was no better than the one that the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell received in the House. They wrote, "In this case the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, does not apply as no agreement was entered into by Ms. Dickenson, and as such, the ministry cannot take action."

"Ms. Dickenson may have legal recourse in this case and may wish to consult a lawyer about her options."

1630

Again, I just want to remind Ontarians to keep that answer in mind when they hear the government talking about this bill and the great things they're doing involving consumer protection.

It will provide some help in a few limited areas, but there still needs to be MPPs standing up and going to bat for their constituents. They'll be told, "Sorry, we can't help. I hope your constituent has the time and money on their hands to take the contractor to court." Personally, I don't think that's consumer protection, and I think that the ministry should be doing more than just giving information.

I want to spend some time also talking about this door-to-door sales component of this legislation because I know it's something of concern to constituents in my riding. We've seen examples of unconscionable salespeople who like to target seniors in particular with their too-good-to-be-true scams. In this bill it's good to see that the minister's doubling the cooling-off period for water heater rentals to 20 days. It's interesting that this is the only type of contract for which they've implemented

this measure. Why not take a look at some other future performance types of contracts right now?

I think people should be aware that this bill can still leave them open for some severe penalties if they don't completely resolve the contract cancellation within those 20 days. Our critic was here earlier, the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and he pointed out in his address that cancellation charges can run consumers into the hundreds of dollars, and I think that's very significant.

The bill we spoke about earlier, Bill 14, talked about waiving a \$45 charge at the Landlord and Tenant Board and how groups have come to us and said how important it is for consumer protection that we be able to waive that \$45 charge, yet this piece of legislation opens consumers up for hundreds of dollars of penalties. So I want to put that into perspective because we spoke about Bill 14 earlier today.

Beyond the cancellation, the companies can also hit the consumer with huge damage charges if there's even a scratch on those tanks that are up to 10 years old.

What's also missing here is the requirement for a salesperson—and I think this is very important—to provide full disclosure of the costs and penalties associated in the contract up front. Again, hopefully members will agree that having all those costs and having that disclosure up front is important. The best consumer is an informed consumer, and I think that is a very, very important item that we need to include in this bill.

If you require companies to disclose all of the details of the contract in plain language prior to someone signing it, that's a lot better than trying to fix the problem after the fact. I'm sure our constituency offices all have examples of that.

These are just some of the questions and concerns that our caucus and our critic the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry have raised.

So perhaps it's not surprising that one of the proponents of the bill is a company under investigation by the Competition Bureau.

You know, speaking about the bill today I'm reminded of an area of consumer protection that I've tried to engage with previous ministers on. In fact, it was about a year ago, as we were preparing for the May long weekend, sort of the official kickoff of the summer, that I tried to get some action on gasoline prices. I asked the government to step up and help me tackle an issue that has phones ringing off the hook in my constituency office.

The concern wasn't just the price of gas, which we all know went up higher thanks to this government's HST. It was the fact that gas companies in one of my communities in my riding, in Brockville, were charging prices that were significantly higher than those in other eastern Ontario communities. Those people who were calling were using very strong words, words like "collusion" and "price gouging." Here's what my local daily newspaper, the Brockville Recorder and Times had to say. This is a quote from their newspaper story: "Once known as an

oasis of competitive gas prices, Brockville is quickly gaining a reputation as a place motorists want to avoid."

The quote from Pierre St. Jean, who was gassing up at the time the reporter was there: "Prices are terrible compared to Ottawa."

The story later goes on to say, "Clerks at a couple of gas bars did note on the condition of anonymity, however, that they are hearing complaints from motorists upset at" those "local prices."

They later on said that they hear it all the time from people, especially those who are travelling through eastern Ontario, using 401 and 416 going forward.

"So motorists are left to speculate why prices are lower all around Brockville, where the cost jumped"—in this story—"as much as six cents Thursday night to just under"—at the time—"\$.125 per litre at outlets across the city."

The paper then went on and ran a poll and found that 98% of folks thought that there was something fishy with the way they fluctuated. I had asked the minister of the day whether she was with the 98% or with the 2%.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Bill 55, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm listening very carefully to the remarks.

Continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: If the minister wants to pick up the discussion, she can just go on YouTube and watch the exchange and decide whether she wants to take up the issue of consumer protection when it comes to gas prices. I know that she said in the House that consumer protection is a bit of a passion of hers as a minister, so I hope that she'll consider taking up the challenge. We're looking forward to another long weekend, and I think it's very important that we all have consumer protection on our minds.

As well, during the debate the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talked about the other sections of this act. Certainly, he and the member for—Mr. Smith. What's his riding?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Steve Clark: Prince Edward-Hastings; that's right. Sorry to Mr. Smith. He had the real estate side of the discussion, and I found that—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know, Joe. It's 20 minutes, right?

He talked about the real estate side of it, and I know he had a private member's bill that he was encouraged by the government adding to the system. I know that consumer protection—I know it just deals with debt settlement, door-to-door sales and the real estate side, but I do really think that when we go back to our ridings, especially now that we're moving into a break week and we'll be in our constituencies—rather than this last six weeks when we've been back and forth—we will get a chance to engage with our constituents, talk to them about this bill and really understand the real consumer protection issues that are taking place in the province.

I look forward to further debate on the bill. I want to apologize to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for messing up his riding name.

Mr. Todd Smith: That's okay—wherever you're from.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, wherever I'm from.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for allowing me to debate Bill 55.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to speak to Bill 55, the Consumer Protection Act. Ontario New Democrats have long called for consumer protection. Certainly that's nothing new to us. We've also talked about consumer protection in the form of a consumer advocate, because what the member was talking about was someone who couldn't find recourse. They went to the OPP, they went to the insurance company, but if they had a consumer advocate, they could call that office and get their voices heard and get direction on what happened and where to go and what resources they had so they'd have an actual agency advocate to hear them. That was what the frustration was for his constituent. No one was there to listen to the fact that this person came on to her property and started work without her consent.

I think that's a step forward, and I hope that when this bill gets sent to committee—if we're all in agreement, of course—some of that expertise, testimony, deputants coming to the committee, will maybe express the need of how important a consumer advocate is for consumer protection. You can have the bill say “consumer protection,” but if there is not an advocacy to actually enforce for consumers concerned, it kind of leaves it a little bit weak there.

We know that over many, many years, there have been abuses to consumer services by sales reps who come around knocking door-to-door. Consumers are sometimes not educated on the contracts, because they can be very complicated.

1640

I'm glad to see that this addresses the door-to-door sales of water heaters. Hopefully this will have some protection for people who are faced with entering those contracts and some recourse in that timeline where they sign that contract and back out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Consumer Affairs.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'm thrilled, of course, to be up talking about Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. I was absolutely thrilled to introduce this recently into the House. When we talk about consumer protection, it's something that all the parties can agree is a good thing to do. Protecting consumers has a number of other benefits; it not only protects the consumer per se, but it builds their confidence in the marketplace. When we have a strong marketplace in Ontario, that's good for the economy and it's good for jobs.

I think that's why we can all readily agree that consumer protection is a very important thing in Ontario and

that Ontario can be very proud of the number of consumer protection provisions already in place. Bill 55, as we're talking about today, seeks to bring even stronger measures forward.

We have very strong education and awareness programs around consumer protections. We have a 1-800 number. We have compliance and enforcement measures under the Consumer Protection Act and we have hefty fines, if need be, against corporations and individuals if there are violations of that legislation.

It is important that we keep responding to changing trends in the marketplace, and Bill 55 proposes to do just that in terms of door-to-door sales of water heaters, putting stronger rules around debt settlement companies and modernizing things around real estate transactions. I just wanted to add to the comments from the member from Leeds-Grenville that it's not just about real estate transactions, but dealing with phantom bids. There's a lot in that bill and I look—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm happy to rise to address the comments made by my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, who is always very insightful and makes some good points. This bill addresses some key issues in the Consumer Protection Act that have been long overdue. Some concerns were had with the bill and those are some things we'll be working for. There's no question we're looking for a very strong competitive field out there, especially in the hot water sales that we're talking about.

We have two large incumbents. We still haven't addressed the issue with allowing new, smaller companies into the field and allowing for the seamless cancellation of the former contracts. We have some issues there that we would like to see addressed so that we really have true competition.

As well, we have some payment issues that make it very difficult for small companies to compete when they're restricted in billing, because if somebody has an issue with their hot water heater, do they really have to wait 20 days? It makes it very difficult sometimes. Maybe the wording can be changed to make that a little bit easier and more friendly, actually, for the consumer. There's no question door-to-door sales can be high-pressure, and they pick on certain elements of our society. We want to see that that's done right, and that the bad apples don't create a bad name for everybody else.

Debt settlement is certainly an issue that needs to be regulated. We need to look at it and make sure, again, that we have some real teeth in it that stop the bad players and protect the part of our business where we seem to not always get the most favourable of reviews. But in actual fact, it is a needed service. We'll work through committee and we're also looking to make sure that at least some of these changes are made.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? Yes, the member for Caledon—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and comment on some of the comments that were made by my colleague from—Leeds–Grenville; I should know that by now. The issues and the stories that he was raising and talking about in his speech were, to me, what we should be discussing when we talk about consumer protection bills. I think that we could have done a much more thorough job to ensure that what's in here is actually what we're seeing in our communities and back in our ridings. I think, quite frankly, that they missed the mark, and some of the comments that the member from Leeds–Grenville made highlighted that to me. If we had done a more thorough job of trying to figure out where the issues were and how we as legislators could resolve them, then perhaps this debate and discussion could have been a more fruitful use of our time.

There are certainly some good aspects of Bill 55, which the member spoke of, but there are also some glaring omissions that I wish we would have been able to cover. Perhaps I'll be an optimist and say that we can start dealing with some of those in committee, but I am concerned because, as we all know, you can't add brand new things in committee. You can only amend existing items that are in the legislation. Even in committee, you are actually quite limited as to what you can extend and add to a piece of proposed legislation. The member's personal examples that came from his riding really bring home that there are issues out there, but there are issues that we still need to deal with.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Consumer Services, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and also the member for Dufferin–Caledon for their comments.

I also would like to ask for unanimous consent to call the special debate filed by Mr. Wilson on April 29, 2013, to be called for debate on Monday, June 3, 2013, and to recognize that, given that June is classified as Dairy Month, we ask the Speaker to recognize the special role that Ontario's great dairy farmers play to add to the economy of the province of Ontario and supply management.

I therefore ask for unanimous consent of the aforementioned and request that the Speaker issue a letter of congratulations to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to recognize their hard work.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay.

"I believe we would have unanimous consent to call the special debate filed by Mr. Wilson on April 29, 2013, to be called for debate on Monday, June 3, 2013, and to recognize that, given that June is classified as Dairy Month, we ask the Speaker to recognize the special role that Ontario's great dairy farmers play to add to the economy of the province of Ontario and supply management.

"I therefore ask for unanimous consent of the aforementioned and request that the Speaker issue a letter of

congratulations to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to recognize their hard work."

Do I have unanimous consent? Seeing none, further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm really looking forward to speaking on Bill 55, an act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, but first I'd like to take a moment. If we're going to declare June Dairy Month, which is a great idea, we should perhaps talk to the House leaders first and actually do it the way the House actually works. Then it would be declared Dairy Month, instead of trying to play games with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, as the Tories are trying to do. Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to veer off.

On behalf of my constituents, I think this bill has its problems, and I'm going to get into these problems, but for the people at home, this is one of those bills that actually could make a difference directly in their lives. Because a lot of the stuff we talk about here is very important to the province as a whole. All of it is incredibly important, but a lot of it, for lack of a better—if you're sitting at home just trying to pay your bills, it's way up in the stratosphere, what we're talking about. We're talking about the budget and we're talking about all the bad things we talk about, like Ornge and eHealth, but that's way up here for people. Bills like this—consumer protection—are the bread and butter for the people watching at home, for the people who are having to face one of these door-to-door guys.

1650

I live in the country. I've always lived in the country. We don't get a lot of energy retailers, and I'm going to go into that. This bill doesn't specifically talk about energy retailers, because they're dealt with somewhere else. It has changed, but they're still out there. But in the country, we don't get them that often because, quite frankly, there's no money in it because the houses are too far apart and most of us aren't served by—so the first time I actually encountered the energy retail field was when I ran the first time provincially. I was knocking on doors, and in certain neighbourhoods where people were already having a hard time getting by, there were little stickers on the doors. These neighbourhoods had been targeted by high-pressure salespeople who were going to save them some money, and didn't save them any money at all.

These people were just trying to get on with their lives. They didn't have the capacity or the time to really realize what these people were doing to them. Quite frankly, a lot of them didn't know what recourse they would have. With this bill, they still won't, because those same people will still be targeted. I know that the government has done something—has done a little—on the energy retail sector, but my office is still dealing with them. It's so bad in the energy retail field, and still is.

I don't have any big cities in my riding; we have small towns. Small townspeople know each other. If we hear there's an energy retail crew coming to the town, we con-

tact the paper, we contact the council, we put out press releases and we try to get them booted out of town. Now, should that be put into a law? I don't think so. But at least we're trying to protect the people beforehand. That's a big issue, and we still have to do that. Every MPP in this House, I'm sure, has had to do things to protect against these people.

One of the problems I have with this specific act is it's putting energy retailers, insurance brokers and real estate brokers kind of in the same package. I've dealt with a lot of real estate brokers and, by and large, they're not the same type of people as energy retailers or water heater salesmen.

You know the big difference? It's something my dad taught me a long time ago: If someone comes to your house unannounced, uninvited, to sell something, they're probably not doing it in your best interest; they're doing it in their best interest. That's a big difference here. Those people—the water heater salesmen, the energy retailer, the person who is going to fix your roof, but you have to do it this morning otherwise your two-for-one deal, two roofs for one, won't be there in another three hours—aren't there to help you.

It concerns me a bit that the way this is packaged, the real estate brokers are kind of in the same package. For some reason, it seems like an odds-and-ends bill. Some good things, and they sweep it all together and everybody gets swept into the same dustbin. I have a bit of a problem with that; I have a lot of a problem with that.

But let's go for the water heater folks. The cooling-off period, all those things—I think part of this is, there should be a much bigger education component to warn people actually before, because, you've got to remember, these people are at home, minding their own business, and someone who is highly trained on how to do this, on how to push this water heater or whatever down somebody's throat—these people are trained to do this and they pick where to do it.

There has to be more than just a cooling-off period. Is a cooling-off period, a longer one, better? Yes. Am I going to stand here and say it's a regressive step? No, of course not. It's a step forward; hopefully we can do something to make it, perhaps, a bigger step. Somehow put more—and this would be a long-term thing, but maybe we should actually start—we've talked a lot in the Local Food Act on how we should have food literacy in schools, right? Great idea. Maybe we should have consumer literacy in schools, you know, to actually warn people how the world really works.

It's because there are a lot of people out there, and these people are trained; they're very good at their job and they're extremely high pressure. Maybe we should go back to my dad's—if someone comes uninvited, unannounced and they're going to give you the deal of your lifetime, maybe that's not a good thing.

It's almost like—and I'm going to stray a little bit, but last night, my good friend the member for Timmins—James Bay and I, we were—he's moving, so we were helping him move. I got an email from some place in—

oh, I can't remember the country's name, but someone had \$3.8 million waiting for me. So we were discussing whether I should announce today that I'm not running again. I'm done. I'm going to a warm place and I'm done with this job. But it's the same type of deal, except these people—we can laugh at that, but this is a long way away—are right in your face, in your door, and it's a huge, huge problem.

So I'm hoping, I truly want this bill to go to committee, and I want to strengthen it as much as I can—as much as we can—because it's not just water heaters; the energy retailers are still a problem. The member before me talked about laneway repairs—anything like that—somehow we have to see if we can somehow help people defend themselves against that.

On the Collection Agency Act, the amendment to the collection agencies—and the amendment, for the folks at home, isn't to the collection agencies, it's to the debt settlement people. So if you open up certain newspapers, half of this one page is psychics and the other half is how you can reduce your debts and fight off the creditors.

These people really aren't coming to your door; you're going to them. You're already in bad shape because obviously you're being hounded by a debt collection agency, but the problem goes even farther back. The problem is that these people once again are being assaulted by "Buy now, pay later; buy now, pay later," and quite frankly, they are suffering, in a lot of cases—not in every case, but in a lot of cases—from falling behind in wages. They feel they're falling behind, and credit is too easy. Interest, you know, sounds cheap, but on a lot of credit things, it isn't cheap. They find themselves, before they know it—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Trapped.

Mr. John Vanthof: —trapped. They look at these debt settlement agencies as a way out. Some of them don't provide a way out but provide good, solid advice. I think even from these agencies, the danger with a lot of these things is you lump the good and bad into the group.

If I could back up a step, with the people who come to your door and aggressively try to shove something down your throat, they're not good or bad; they're all bad. But with the debt settlement agencies, there are good ones, fairly good ones, and there's fly-by-night ones that are basically just going to make your problems worse.

1700

Once again, when this bill—if it goes forward to committee, I'm hoping that the stakeholders in that sector come forward and present to the members of the committee so that whoever is on that committee, whichever committee it gets sent to, can actually take a good, hard look and make sure that the consumers are protected, and also that the good don't get lumped in with the bad.

Part of the problem—why there are so many debt settlement agencies and why we need so many is because people are falling behind. Once again, our whole society is built on "the more you buy, the better for the economy." A lot of these people can't afford to buy, but

society is geared to make them buy. That's something that we have to be cognizant of. These agencies are filling a void. Some of them are doing what they should be doing; some of them aren't. There's something in here that they can't—the process has to be done before they get paid. Well, really, if you're a legitimate agency, I'm not sure if it's a long process, if that's really what we're aiming for.

In the few minutes I've got left, I'd like to talk about the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the changes that are being proposed here. Once again, real estate brokers fall into a different category than the—I'm looking for a word, because if you haven't gathered yet, for the members here and the folks at home, I really don't like energy retailers. I really don't like the people. I don't think it's unparliamentary: Real estate brokers are not like the piranhas who come to your door and take your money.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I think I—

Mr. John Vanthof: I withdraw. I sincerely withdraw, Speaker.

But once again, real estate brokers provide an essential service, and I believe that they are—over my lifetime, we've bought and sold a few houses and bought and sold a few farms, and had some very good experiences with real estate brokers and a few not so good. It's like any other sector; there are good and there are not so good.

I think these amendments, specifically about proving whether there were other offers—I think that's a step in the right direction, because once again, if you always—in small-town Ontario or in the country, we tend to deal with the same people for years. You build up relationships, but once in a while there's someone else who's going to take it if you don't take it, and that's why you have to move now. Well, if you've dealt with the same person for years, you kind of know if it's upfront or not—at least you hope you know—but once again, it's becoming more high pressure all the time, so perhaps some of these proposals are warranted.

On behalf of my caucus, I think we all—that this bill goes to committee and that we take a good long look at truly protecting consumers. I think that's the most important. It's called the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, and if we really—I've heard today, again, and I've said it many times, that the government across the aisle is very good at naming acts, and they are. Lots of times, the name says more than what's in the act. Well, I'm very hopeful that this time, we actually look at the name and say, "Okay, we're going to do everything possible to actually protect consumers."

I'm going to go back: One of the biggest parts—I think every MPP has had people come to their office, and we have gone to the wall for them. I've had a discussion with the MPP from Kenora-Rainy River on things she did for people in her riding on the energy retailer front. We've all had that. We've all done it.

But there's a problem, because not everyone thinks of going to the MPP or they don't all happen to hear about the workshop that the MPP is holding. The Minister of

Consumer Affairs said, "They have a 1-800 number." Well, not everybody thinks about the 1-800 number; not everybody is willing to wait and wait and wait on the 1-800 number. Somehow we have to do a much better job of educating people.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A consumer advocate.

Mr. John Vanthof: A consumer advocate—that's a good idea. I think that's in here; I should have read that.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's not in the bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: But we should think about doing that.

Interjection: The Ombudsman.

Mr. John Vanthof: We're giving a lot of work to the Ombudsman, but really, couldn't we somehow, when we see there's a problem, when we see that people are being preyed upon—shouldn't there be an office to say, "Whoa, there's something wrong there. We should put a public statement out"? There are public statements out now. Go look at the Ontario budget. We're spending, right now, a lot of money advertising the Ontario budget. In my riding, on the radio, "Inform yourselves about the advantages of the new Ontario budget."

Couldn't we as a Legislature, when we know people are being preyed upon, say no and put out an advertising campaign of, "Know your rights. Here are your rights when someone comes to your door"? Why couldn't we have advertising or something like that to warn people, or at least to inform people?

Once again, we don't want to trample on legitimate businesses—I've run a business for a long time—but when there are 107 of us and we all have people coming in to our offices with the same complaint. Couldn't there be something of a stronger protection that, when something is identified, would trigger the consumer advocate to put out a warning? Wouldn't that be a novel idea, someone who could inform people.

The Conservative member before me said that he saw a couple of people with water heater salesman; they were across the road. He came across and said, "Hey, you guys are water heater salesmen." And he had the advantage because he was a member of provincial Parliament and he knew because he'd been discussing this. Wouldn't it be great if a lot of people knew what these people were capable of when they came to the door? That would make a big difference, and in the big picture it would save people grief, it would save people money and it would make this province a lot better a place to live. So yes, a consumer advocate who had the power to inform people would make a big difference in this bill. With that, Speaker, I'd like to thank you for your time. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013. This bill deals with three things: door-to-door sales, debt settlement services and real estate consumer protection.

The Ministry of Consumer Services received over 3,000 complaints about door-to-door sales. That's the

number 2 ranking in the type of complaints that the ministry has gotten, amongst the top 10. Currently under the Consumer Protection Act there's very limited protection for consumers with regard to door-to-door water heater rentals. The door-to-door water heater sales—this bill intends to do four things. It requires that the salesman states in clear language the rights that the consumer has, and it would double the cooling-off period from 10 to 20 days, in which delivery would be prohibited, and it would have stronger remedies if these rules are breached, which include some very high fines. Also, what I think is a very important part of the bill is that this change requires that the call be recorded to verify the key terms and conditions of the contract.

1710

It's a great bill. I think it goes a long way in addressing some of the most common problems that people face when—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I rise again to talk about the comments made by the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. He brings up some issues. We have a bill here that addresses just a very little bit of the consumer protection part. It's funny, I met with a couple from my riding just last week. They came in and they showed me their hydro bill, and they really were there to say they could no longer afford their home. I looked at their tax bill. Their taxes were very reasonable, which made me assume that the house they were talking about was very modest. The hydro bills were killing them; they were over \$400 every two months. They had somebody in, an electrician, to look and see if they could somehow do something. They had already converted to gas hot water and a gas clothes dryer. They had literally done everything they could, but they still were saying, with expenses going up—fixed income, both retired—they could no longer afford to live in their house, and they didn't know what they could do. This is a common subject that I hear in our riding.

We need to look at consumer protection, but people need to be protected from this government. We've seen rates go up so high. Their pensions may be indexed at 1% or 2% a year. They just can't keep up, and they're getting desperate. Their comment to me was they didn't know if I could do anything, but they wanted to make sure that I knew just how hard it was to stay in their house. I was somewhat amazed at some of their bills. Even their property taxes—not to point fingers at the township, but really, their increases are—I know some of the local mayors, having been one myself, no longer have money to put into roads. They're going in regulation.

We just have to do something, and it's time that we do something to really protect the consumer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I always like the speeches of my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane because he's full of practical suggestions, and he's a man full of

wisdom. The last comment he made in his speech had to do with, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a consumer advocate in this province?" It would be good to have a consumer advocate everywhere in fact, but wouldn't it be good to have a consumer advocate in this province?

The problem that we have in this province is that we are always dealing with caveat emptor—the lawyers would know that expression—which in plain English is "Buyer beware." The onus is always on the buyer. Wouldn't it be wonderful to reverse that and put the responsibility on those who commit fraud, on the corporations, to be a little more responsible on anything that has to do with condominiums and making sure that we protect them before they get into a situation where somebody is about to commit fraud against them?

We need someone who protects consumers, and while Bill 55 protects consumers a little more than we do now, we need to send it to committee to make it a bit stronger. That's what we want, and we want to make sure that we indeed talk about a consumer advocate that would protect consumers, and we should be thinking about that on a regular basis, because we can't rely on the buyer to always beware of what he's doing. In fact, most people buy a product hoping that everything is going to go all right, that everything is going to be all right. They say, "No, no, read the fine print. You better read the fine print." Well, what human being reads the fine print? I don't think lawyers even read the fine print from time to time. So we need a consumer advocate to help out. That's what we—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Ajax-Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I just want to make a couple of comments on the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane on Bill 55—a couple of valid points. He indicated that some of the salespeople are good and some are not so good, and he's right. He's talking about perhaps expanding the bill. He's right again, and I would certainly concur with him because sometimes those most impacted are people like single mothers with young children, and they're devastated. He knows, I know and I think all members know, because we have to go and visit the families.

On all of the protection that's coming forward, whether it's door-to-door sales or hot water heaters—that's perhaps one of the worst cases ever in that scenario. The debt settlement services and the predatory debt settlement—just the fact that they're going to have to now show certain things and certain fees publicly is going to solve some issues.

The real estate consumer protection: That's the phantom offers that come in, nothing signed. Now they're going to have to do that. On the à la carte services, you're going to remove the prohibition from the fee commission structures. Why should someone be paid twice?

It goes on and on. I agree to expand it wherever you can. I was just thinking, I was in a parking lot on the

weekend doing some charitable work, and three men came with big boxes of goods for sale. Having been on local council and regional council etc., I said, "Oh, you must have paperwork on that." They pulled out a packing slip. It could have been a speeding ticket for all I know. I said, "What about your jurisdiction to do this? Do you not understand the legislation? I helped put it in place in this community 20 years ago." "Oh, well, we've got the authority." I said, "Well, look, here's my card"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton West and the members for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Trinity—Spadina and Ajax—Pickering.

I think they all said it. We're all looking for ways to make it better for consumers. The member from Kenora—Rainy River brought something up, and I'm going to have to correct my remarks a little bit because if you take my remarks literally, I would like to stop door-to-door sales by Girl Guides, and that's not the point. I can joke about that, but that's not the point, and I think everyone can see there's a difference.

But the member from Trinity—Spadina brought up a good point, that the onus is always on the buyer. Sometimes I think we have to go a little bit further and make sure that—and I think this bill, on the real estate part, does that to a point. It puts a bit more onus on the broker. I understand that there is—you can't divulge prices, and we're okay with that, but to make sure that the offers are legitimate offers and not just wink-wink, nudge-nudge, because you've got to buy now. There's a difference.

If this bill goes to committee, we have to take a long, hard look and make sure that it does live up to the title as much as it can because it's not just water heaters, it's not just energy. There's a whole genre out there, and when you fix one, they just move to the next. We have to take a look at how we can protect consumers as a whole from predatory retail door-to-door practices.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a pleasure to stand and support Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. We're truly trying here to do a couple of things: better protect consumers from high-pressure door-to-door sales, better protect vulnerable and indebted consumers from predatory debt settlement services and improve the rules protecting buyers and sellers of real estate.

1720

One of the ones that interests me the most is the issue of indebted consumers. Often people, when they've lost their jobs in a recession, start living on their credit cards, hoping that that job is just a week away and they'll be back on their feet. They go through their savings, they give up their liquidity and it puts them in a very difficult situation. At a point of greatest vulnerability, those folks are often much more easily pressured, because they don't feel very confident and they don't feel very secure. I think that is particularly important.

Prohibiting upfront fees before services are rendered and a limit on the amount of fees I think is critically important and a very positive step forward. To require clear contract disclosures, I think, is really, really critical, and misleading sales practices and advertising are also very, very important.

The ability of people to lure debtors into contracts that really provide absolutely no benefit or very little benefit in settling the debt—the fees are often usurious, and the person or the agency has very little involvement in negotiating payment or finding a reasonable outcome. Too often, they also provide for escape clauses that invalidate the contract if the person is sued.

On real estate, it's particularly important, because we're in the middle of a real estate boom in many parts of this province, where people are high-pressured. I remember looking at 57 different condos over two years before I finally found a place to live. I remember all the tricks: \$50,000 for a city view. Having been a mayor, I went down to check at the planning department. The city view was there, but only for another six months. It was going to be the back end of the Monarch condominiums view. People were charging \$50,000 and \$75,000 more for a city view, never actually telling them that the city councillor in that area had lifted the height restriction, so they actually were not going to see the CN Tower or the lake or any of the things that were being marketed. They were going to be looking into a concrete wall. So there is a huge amount of consumer concerns around that.

People have talked about high-pressure sales. My mother is a pretty astute person; she's 85. I'm always amazed—the building she lived in was known to have a lot of seniors in it—how many times she calls me at home in the evening because someone is on her doorstep with some deal or creating some sort of crisis that something has gone wrong that she has to pay for to fix. That is just really unfair, especially given, with an aging population, the number of elderly women who are living on their own, who are particularly vulnerable.

I also just want to say in passing that I really enjoyed the commentary by the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. He has become one of my favourite members. He actually makes me laugh every time I'm in the House.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, I love everybody, you know, but I have to say he's one of the most down-to-earth and humorous people. I want to thank him for the great goodwill he brings to this House all the time. He's really a delight.

I want to talk a little bit about debt settlement, because I think there's a lot more we have to do. As a minister, I cannot bring forward a bill or anything like that. But I want to talk about how serious things are getting as things change.

We have called this phase 1 of our legislation, so rather than repeating the same speaking notes we've all been running through, I'd like to talk a little bit about what I see as some of the things we have to move forward to deal with in the future.

I was a victim of identity theft, and it was one of the most shocking and appalling experiences I've had in my life. Usually, I'm not easily made afraid of things, but I actually felt, probably for the better part of a year, that I was trapped in a situation not of my making that I couldn't get out of. I just want to describe how serious this is, and why I think predatory debt services really compound these things.

I got a phone call one day—it was about five or six years after I moved back to Toronto—from a credit collection agency claiming I owed tens of thousands of dollars to Home Depot and Best Buy. Now, I know this will feed a stereotype that's terrible, but I actually haven't shopped at Home Depot or Best Buy. I couldn't figure out how this happened. The bills were over two years old; there were almost 30 months since the purchases had been made. So I'm sitting there thinking, how could I owe all this money in a store I've never even been in, and how could almost 30 months go by before I would actually know that I owed that money?

Well, this is what happened. At the Whitby Home Depot, a place I've never been into in my life, someone walked in there with a cancelled letter. That's all they had. Apparently, at the end, I found out that they'd actually gotten all my personal information by going to car dealerships. Have you ever been in a car showroom? They actually leave your signed contracts out on someone's desk—there's a Porsche dealership and a Volvo dealership and an Acura dealership in my neighbourhood; I'm always going there—and it has your social insurance number on it. You have to fill out all this information. The car salespeople just leave that at their desks.

So what people do is they take a BlackBerry like this and they just take pictures, so they get your social insurance number and all of that. They figure out where you live and then they just go and try to find a cancelled piece of mail. What they actually often do is they go into the mailrooms or into that area in front of the—where people throw out their—you know, you get all that junk mail and stuff, and in a condo there's a big blue bin full of all the crap that came in that no one wants, and they'll pull out a few people, if they can match that.

So these big-box retailers will actually give you a credit card based on if you can get a social insurance number and a cancelled envelope. They got a Home Depot credit card in about five minutes. They actually advertise—when I actually called Home Depot, the first thing this person said was, “You can get this credit card in less than 12 hours with no questions asked.” Well, that was the problem. Then they went and spent \$5,000 on the first day, took that credit card and the same information and got a Best Buy credit card and went on a shopping spree.

Now, they love to advertise that there's no money down, no payments for 18 or 24 months, so this person didn't owe anything. Two years went by and there was no default on payment because they weren't required because of this great deal. So 30 months later, six months

into default, I then find out. Then you go to try to get the issue resolved. Well, actually, you find out it's not Home Depot and it's not Best Buy; it's Wells Fargo and it's Citibank in the United States.

Then I got into a three-month game going back and forth, where Home Depot said, “Well, it's not us. You have to deal with Wells Fargo.” Wells Fargo said, “No, no, we didn't sign the card. You have to deal with Home Depot.” Home Depot would say, “No, your loan is with Wells Fargo.” The same thing went on between Citibank and Best Buy. This went on for three months.

Meanwhile, my credit rating is now in the tank. Try to call the credit bureau and get it changed. It's you against Wells Fargo, Citibank, Home Depot and Best Buy. Well, I didn't win that battle. I would have been stuck with an absolutely flat credit rating and money—I could not prove that it wasn't me, because the videotapes they keep—because they videotape those things at the store, at the credit branch—they only keep for six months. Again, since it's 30 months before the default comes in, all the tapes are gone. This is the kind of scam that goes on. They did phone me to offer me debt credit services, along the lines of the ones we're regulating.

The only reason I got out of it is that at the time I was a Star columnist. I wrote a column about this experience in the Toronto Star, on consumerism. Because they were getting so much bad press—I got over a thousand emails and people who, from across Canada, responded to that column. Without that column, I would have never gotten out of it. I still meet people today who have never been able to resolve that issue because they can't beat the big US banks and they cannot beat the credit bureaus. The credit bureau has no obligation to the consumer, and it's the consumer is guilty until he can prove himself innocent.

It was interesting to see how much money this costs the economy every year. It is really pervasive. It is the most common form of theft—identity theft and the resulting theft that takes place. So I'm hoping as we move forward—and I think what is a very good start in these areas that we actually start to take on in the second phase of this legislation. These are the kinds of non-partisan issues I think all of us would want to support, that we really have to start tackling the idea of security, identity, identity theft, and put regulations on requiring reporting of credit cards and verification of identity before credit cards are given out. I think there's a lot more too.

1730

The kinds of things we're doing today take about five or six really critical issues—and I really credit Minister MacCharles. It takes a whole bunch of those high-pressure sales. This bill really deals with the people who are very vulnerable and most vulnerable to predatory deals, to debt services, to home sales and those kinds of things, as my friend from Ajax-Pickering says, without hurting Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and all the other people who sell good things at our doors. But this is just an area we're beginning to look at in consumer protection. There is an endless more amount to do.

The other piece about in the marketplace, the stuff you don't know—I'd like to take a minute. The idea that you actually have to report and report in writing now when you go to buy a house, this high pressure sales that there's so many people bidding on it, is also really critical. We have a high-pressure consumer market. There are very difficult times right now for people who are trying to get into their first household. The threshold now is 20%. It is now harder to get a mortgage than ever before. For young people today, if they don't get into homeownership early, it is very hard to do it.

Our jobs are increasingly urban. In almost every one of the world's economies now, the large urban regional economies—Paris, London, Frankfurt, Berlin—are where most of the job growth is in an innovation economy. The world is actually rapidly urbanizing. It is creating huge pressures on rural, small town and northern communities to retain population. When people come in to cities and they have to quickly find a place to live, they are also increasingly vulnerable to these high-pressure sales, and people can get talked into that. The fact that we actually are slowing that down, finally putting some obligations on the real estate agents to produce in writing and taking that pressure off—

I dare say that one of the things that I've really liked about this debate in the House is that members on both sides, and I could say three sides—this is a pretty triangulated relationship these days—have all raised some very, very positive ideas about going forward, because the one thing about consumer protection today is that because of the Internet, because everyone has a camera, because our information is so easily accessed and it's so hard to protect yourself, sometimes I almost feel like we're chasing a jet plane to catch up to all of the legislation.

I also just to want to really thank Minister MacCharles, because she's been one of the—she's not a terribly partisan person, and she's really been reaching out to all of us, certainly in our caucus here in government and I know to members of the opposition, to start to build this. When she talked about this as phase 1, and that there would be a second and future legislation, I think there was an acknowledgement that what we're trying to do here is not wait to solve every problem but let's get early action on the stuff that is well established, in which we've got consensus with industry, we've got support to move forward on in this House.

But I'm hoping this bill gets through quickly because it's a solid, excellent piece of legislation. It's a good start and because we need to get this to committee because I'm sure that when this goes to committee this will be a discussion, as it often is, where people come down and say, "I'm really glad you're doing this, but I'd also like you to do this, this and this." And I don't think that's a bad thing.

I was talking with some of my friends across the way there that one of the things that Premier Wynne has been trying to do is open up this House, make private members' bills a more important part of the discussion, try to

reflect more of the consensus of the House in important government legislation, look at the kinds of things that aren't partisan issues, that whether you're representing Kenora or Cornwall, these are things that matter to people. I'm hoping that spirit has been embraced.

I've been a little bit concerned about the official opposition in that, but I want to commend the third party because I think that the members of the third party have responded positively. I mean, we all have to kick each other in the shin; there's a partisan game that goes on. While we think it's somewhat necessary, I think most people outside these halls look at us during question period—every time I bring my mother down, she says, "I raised you to be better than that, Glen." She walks in and she says, "Don't these people know their mothers are watching?" But we've really reached out, and I appreciate that, because I think that when we actually get those chances to be Ontarians before we're Liberals, Conservatives or New Democrats, it often brings out the best. These kinds of legislation, when you listen to the discussions around it, people have responded to it.

I look forward to it going to committee because, quite frankly, a number of members opposite spoke to it, and some of the members of the third party I thought had some very positive suggestions about how this bill can be strengthened. I certainly, as a government member, would be very supportive of that. I'm sure the minister will be as well, but these also touch some of the very basic things. A lot of these are very home-centred: your ability to buy a home, to have a clean and safe process, not to be intimidated, to be told the truth, to have a point of accountability, and, while people have free access to your home, that there are responsibilities for people.

The 20-day cooling-off period, I think, is one of the most important things, especially for elderly people. My sister lives in Florida; she's a nurse. I'm married to a nurse. I'm surrounded by nurses. Nurses make lists; they organize your life.

I am not—it may surprise you—the most organized person. I have sticky notes. I have sticky notes on my forehead in the morning; I have sticky notes by the telephone. When I go out the door in the morning, Rick puts sticky notes on everything, including my bag. I have lists of things. No one makes more lists than nurses.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is agreeing. He's a doctor; he knows the importance of nurses with lists, I think.

But it's interesting to me—I'm a parent and a grandparent, and my mom is a great-grandparent now—how much that is important, and how we have to take care of each other intergenerationally.

In our right-on-time lives, 10 days is not much time when sometimes people innocently sign something, and they have to get to other people and get that kind of support—being able to get to a family member who then has the time to review whatever was signed by Mom or Dad, and to put that together.

This is the hard part of this job, Madam Speaker, when you actually have to use up all of your time so we can get enough time under the wire, so we can actually get the bill passed. I've got two more minutes, and I'm really running out of steam here. I could tell a few good jokes. My favourite one is that one about how politicians are people who see the light at the end of the tunnel, and order more tunnel. That was always a problem until I became Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, because the light at the end of the tunnel is getting more tunnel bored—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: You could talk about subways—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I could talk about subways, but then the Speaker is going to tell me, as I'm desperately close to the end—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Fortunately, the Speaker is a wonderful woman and a good friend, and she's allowing me, with some humour, the ability to try and talk out the clock.

I know the irony of me having trouble talking out the clock, and I know at caucus I'm going to have to live this one down. But—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Can't someone heckle me and say something that will really get my blood boiling? You're all being so nice today.

Hon. Michael Chan: The Big Move.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The Big Move. We could talk about the Big Move, and we could talk about the Pan Am Games. We could talk about twinning highways in northern Ontario, which is a good thing. We could talk about the rural roads and bridges program—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, we could talk about how beautiful Shoal Lake is, and Lake of the Woods, and—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Pardon me? There you go. We could talk about all the great things happening on the waterfront. Madam Speaker, I'll get back to the bill.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, I know, I know.

Anyway, about those water heaters: Really, no one should be forced to have to buy a water heater. I mean, what do you do when you actually have four or five water heaters? I don't know. But I have had consumer issues.

I know what I'll talk about for the last minute: the relationship to some of the other things that we've actually done, that I think interface with this bill.

I've actually spent about \$12,000 on HVAC systems in my condo, because they didn't work. One of the things, one of the other pieces of consumer protection, is the College of Trades, because we now, for the first time, will actually be able to verify whether the person was an electrician, a plumber or was properly qualified.

One of the big challenges that I've had, having had my condo just renovated—it was interesting to find out that a

number of the people who came into my condo to do this work—and not very well, because I've had the electrical replaced twice—weren't actually electricians, weren't actually qualified.

Building on the tradition of the College of Trades—I know I'm stretching it—that's another consumer protection which I think actually proposes to do that.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a tax.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's not. It's not.

Anyway, I've really covered the water front, Madam Speaker, so thank you very much for allowing me to be a little bit silly.

To all my members who are here this afternoon talking this through: Thank you for your good humour and your friendship. God bless and keep you all safe, and may you get home to your families tonight in some reasonable period of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

1740

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to rise today to rebut some of the minister's comments on Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, that was brought in. He has told some interesting tales. Living in a small town in rural Ontario, I don't get that many door-to-door salespeople—not that I'm asking for them to come to the door.

Interjection: You're never home.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm never home, yes. In political life, we're never home.

You certainly do hear tales from the riding—or the more populated sections that get door-to-door salespeople coming to their doors—and the need for some type of consumer protection that may or may not be actually addressed in this piece of legislation, but we give some benefit of the doubt for that.

I certainly acknowledge the part on the real estate section. My friend and colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings has brought in his private member's bill for the electronic signing for transactions, which I think we heard loud and clear, certainly, from the real estate industry up in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. We're happy that the government has addressed some of the issues.

There are always many angles to bills that are brought forward here, but certainly I think we're all in agreement of consumer protection that needs to exist. Some of us disagree with how exactly to get there.

We look forward to more debate in the Legislature of the details of the bill. I know that in such a short time I can't go into too many details on this, Madam Speaker, but I'm sure that my colleagues that will have longer time to address this bill will bring forward some remarks and maybe some changes we'd like to see within it.

I thank the minister for the very interesting and entertaining comments that he brought to the House this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 55, the consumer protection act, and to follow the remarks made by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

This bill speaks to an issue that's certainly important to members of my community. More and more people are often being ripped off, one way or another, and they don't actually feel like there is a way to protect themselves, so the issue of consumer protection is important.

I think we all have personal experiences of this. I've been a victim of credit card fraud in the last couple of weeks. I now have to spend that time hunting down that issue—and, Speaker, I'm privileged; I've got lots of resources to do that work, and still it's not that easy for me to do. But if you're somebody who doesn't have language skills, who's working night shifts, who has—

Interjection: A bunch of kids.

Mr. Jonah Schein: —a lot of kids to take care of—they need support on these issues.

I would say, to this bill, first of all, it's a good thing. I think it's a modest bill. It points us in the right direction. Again, I don't think it goes quite far enough. Even the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was talking about things like identity theft, which is a real issue, yet this bill doesn't really do anything to address that issue. I think there's a lot more that this bill could do, and that's why I think we should move it on to committee.

Overall, constituents of mine in Davenport feel like there isn't accountability on a number of issues, whether it's their rights as consumers, whether it's rent control issues, whether it's a lack of labour enforcement officers in Ontario right now.

We need more accountability for people in Davenport and across Ontario. That's why New Democrats are proposing that we actually have a consumer advocate. That's somebody who can be called upon when people need that person, and it's something that's accessible to all people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to follow the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and speak—

Interjection: It's not easy to follow him.

Ms. Soo Wong: Absolutely. It's very, very challenging. He knows the issue very well.

In terms of Bill 55, the section that I want to focus on is the door-to-door sales, because I have heard many, many concerns on this particular section of the bill.

In terms of vulnerable seniors the minister talked about, with respect to his own personal family issue—but also in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, in the sense that even the ministry identifies it as one of the top two issues that the complaints are coming to the ministry about.

If the bill is passed, it will address the door-to-door sales, and especially the pressure tactics of sales. I remember, when I was a young girl, that not only were they selling water heaters; they were selling knives, pots and pans—I don't know what else—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Vacuum cleaners.

Ms. Soo Wong: Vacuum cleaners, that's right—from my colleague here from Scarborough—Rouge River.

The other thing is they were also trying to sell you driveways, roofers and everything under the sun.

Vulnerable seniors, but also new Canadians in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, as well as those whose first language is not English, will have some challenges understanding the contracts.

If the bill is passed, Madam Speaker, it will address some of these issues in terms of the pressure-tactic sales, but also making sure the contract language is clear and that it's plain and simple so that people can understand.

As the Minister of Consumer Services talked about earlier, if passed, this legislation will also have the 20-day cooling-off period. I recently received a call from a constituent whose mother had this pressure tactic and signed the contract and now is trapped with the contract.

I'm hoping that all members will pass the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate and comment on the presentation by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I just want to remind the minister that he did ask for us to heckle him during his presentation, so I hope tomorrow in question period his request is heard loud and clear.

As a result of this bill that we're debating here today, Bill 55, there are three concerns that have been outlined: the debt settlement issue, the door-to-door sales issue, and the real estate issue. I believe I had the opportunity to speak for 45 minutes about this bill in the leadoff, and most of the time I spent talking about the real estate section, so I won't bore those who may be tuning in to the OLA network on a regular basis by going into all that again.

I can tell you, as the former news director at Quinte Broadcasting in Belleville, as the tulips started to come out, so did the door-to-door salespeople right across the province, and when they started to come out—as we've pointed out several times here today, there are some reputable people who go door to door, but there are some bad apples out there as well, and in the newsroom we used to hear an awful lot about the bad apples. We would get calls on a regular basis from seniors—and not just seniors, but those who had been victimized by people who are selling the vacuum cleaners door to door.

Quite often at this time of year, we heard about the people who were willing to pave your driveway at a reduced cost because they had some extra asphalt left over from a job that they did earlier in the day. They wanted \$500 from the homeowner. They said they'd come back and finish up the driveway at a very cheap, reduced cost of maybe \$2,000 if you gave them a little bit of a down payment. But then you would never see those guys again, except for the tail lights, heading off with your \$500.

These are problems across the province; there's no question about that. We just don't believe Bill 55 goes far enough.

I look forward to heckling the minister tomorrow in question period—because he asked for it, right?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's always nice to discover that this is a House with some rather fine and funny people.

I want to thank the members from Prince Edward–Hastings, Scarborough–Agincourt, Davenport, and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—and I hope I didn't miss anybody—for their comments.

I think that most of us are pretty ethical people. I can't imagine, Madam Speaker, you would sell someone a poodle, claiming it was housebroken when it wasn't. I think most people who are in retail and who run businesses are pretty ethical people, and that probably needs to be said. Sadly, there are enough people whose approaches are less ethical and take advantage of people that make this kind of legislation necessary.

The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock makes a very good point: There are differences culturally. I live in a condo in downtown Toronto. There was a certain advantage when we had the family farm in Alexandria, Ontario, because my job was to shoot the groundhogs that were causing problems for the cows, and when I sat out there shooting groundhogs, we never had anyone come to the front door. I was a terrible shot, and those are really small, little guys. You don't exactly, in the city, have those kinds of advantages that you do in rural communities. There is an advantage to having a kid who is 14, with a shotgun, who's a really bad shot—maybe the best deterrent possible to keep untoward peddlers off your front lawn. So there are some great advantages to rural living that many of us who now live in the cities, who spent much of our childhoods in rural Ontario, remember fondly.

There are many days, actually, in city life when it's probably a good thing, especially in traffic, that we don't have shotguns to protect ourselves from things. I've always said one of the greatest reasons for investing in transit and congestion is to bring down the temperature on our highways, and keeping urban folks in traffic unarmed may be a good consumer protection.

1750

Madam Speaker, thank you for your humour and thank you to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will, therefore, be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Madam Speaker, we're having such a fascinating debate on groundhogs that we would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon to discuss not groundhogs but Bill 55, Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act.

Bill 55 was introduced last month, on April 15, and has received a fair amount of debate so far, and that's a good thing, I think, because the issues Bill 55 sets out to address are the kinds of issues that affect Ontario families each and every day. Now, admittedly, things like water heater contracts aren't necessarily as eye-catching or scandalous as \$600-million scandals to save Liberal seats, but you know what? These issues are still worth talking about.

So we have before us here Bill 55, which amends the Consumer Protection Act, the Collection Agencies Act and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. In other words, what we have before us could be called an "omnibus bill." For those watching at home who may not be familiar with that term, the omnibus bill is one that amends multiple different pieces of legislation simultaneously. Usually this is done under the overarching goal of instituting a particular theme or mindset across multiple ministries and acts, and usually there is a great deal of frustration on the part of the opposition in such circumstances, as well as the public, in some cases, because omnibus bills are generally far lengthier and complex than what could be called standard legislation.

In the case of Bill 55, though, I really must say that I know I, for one, would have been happy to support a far more robust omnibus bill than the one we debate before us here today. That's because the fact is that while the contents of Bill 55 are sound, the reality is that this is a very, very narrowcast piece of legislation.

Bill 55 amends the three acts I mentioned earlier and addresses some consumer concerns in three industries: debt settlement, water heaters and real estate. This is a healthy process because certain industries have evolved and others have faded. Consequently, the Consumer Protection Act needs to be updated to reflect these changes in our society. But I suppose my question is, why just these three issues? Frankly, if this government were really concerned about consumer protection, then Bill 55 would have contained a dozen more amendments. So I'd be really interested to know how the minister arrived at these three areas alone. I think this legislation could have been a far more effective bill if it had addressed many more issues of consumer protection and in a more thorough way.

At any rate, the three issues addressed in Bill 55—let's consider debt settlement services. Debt settlement services seems to be one of those issues that is chronically on the peripheral of public concern. I imagine this is because the use of debt settlement services is probably not as widespread as some other issues. However, for anyone who has found themselves in the unfortunate circumstance of requiring debt settlement services, it can be quite the harrowing experience.

So for those who are unfamiliar with the industry, here's how it basically works: Someone who has accumulated an excessive amount of debt and needs to tackle it has the option of seeking out a debt settler. Now, many debt settlers can be honest and indeed very helpful but, as always, there are those who are not.

I want to pause for a moment here and remind members that there is a policy suggestion brought forward by our PC caucus colleague from Nepean–Carleton to include financial literacy in our education system. To me, some of what we are trying to change, modify and improve in Bill 55 could be incorporated into some financial literacy happening with our students in our education system. If people understood the value of keeping their debt down, of paying their credit cards when they come in on a monthly basis, of not buying on credit if they don't have the financial means to pay it off, then some of this could have been resolved and we wouldn't have so many people who unfortunately have to rely on debt settler services. And therein lies the issue, because for consumers and particularly those who are often selecting a debt settler under the duress of impending financial ruin, it is often difficult, if not outright impossible, to tell the difference between the good operators and the bad ones.

Unfortunately, however, the promise of getting out of debt quickly, effortlessly and cheaply is usually too much for people in difficult financial situations to resist. One area where Bill 55 potentially helps strengthen consumer protection is in this industry, by prohibiting debt settlers from charging upfront fees.

Picture this for a moment: An individual is tens of thousands of dollars in debt, maybe even more, and they're told they can get out of it as soon as possible but they have to agree to such and such fees up front. What do you think the individual is going to do? That is a section of Bill 55 that I think will help out significantly in relieving some of the pressure on people who find themselves in that unfortunate circumstance. Having to resort to a debt settlement service is already a stressful experience, particularly because your credit rating can, and most likely will, be significantly affected for the worse.

While I commend this change, there is one glaring absence from this bill on the issue of debt settlement services, and that is the fact that collection agencies can still harass an individual even if they've already settled their debt with a debt settler. This is problematic because an individual has effectively already settled their debt with the debt settler, whose job it is now to just settle the debt. It only makes sense that there should be some measures to address the issue. Basically, what I would have liked to have seen is something along the lines of a measure whereby if a contract with a debt settler guarantees that the consumer will be left alone by collectors, then legislation like this gives that contract teeth so that the collectors get off the person's back.

Another area where Bill 55 does hit the right notes, however, is with regard to addressing certain issues with

advertising in the debt settlement industry. Certainly we in the PC caucus firmly believe in responsible and honest advertising. That is a central means by which consumers choose their products. Therefore, it only makes sense that the more honest the information given to the consumer can be, the more decisions they will be able to make and the better our economy will be.

It reminds me of some of the misleading advertising that we have had to experience and that we as MPPs in our constituency offices have had to deal with, where seniors or people on a fixed income are calling after the fact and trying to get help and assistance from our offices. I'm sure every one of us has had to deal with this, where these fly-by-night operators come into a community, basically pepper the community with lowball offers that are only available for 48 hours, and if you try to follow-up and either get the work corrected or get the money back, then you're faced with, who are they, where are they, how do we follow up with them?

I think there are many things in Bill 55 that we could deal with and we could improve. I look forward to having the committee study some of the improvements that we've already talked about during debate and hope that can happen. I see the Speaker is rising, so I will wrap up for now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

I would ask those of you who are not staying for the late show to make your way out so that we may continue.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The first person is the member for Hamilton Mountain, who has given notice of dissatisfaction to the minister responsible for seniors with the answer to a question on May 9.

1800

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to have this opportunity to discuss this serious matter, one that has been raised by several of my constituents, primarily seniors living in long-term care or supportive housing—but not only my constituents. We have been hearing from Ontarians across this province, and they have expressed great concerns about this government's plan to change the way physiotherapy services are administered.

In question period a few days ago, I took the question to the minister responsible for seniors. The minister rose in this House and assured members “that there are no changes with respect to accessibility to the system or to the care that seniors are receiving in community care, in retirement homes.”

But the government's plan just doesn't add up. We have been asking the government to provide a detailed

plan for maintaining services but have yet to see it. For seniors living in retirement homes, no plan for continuing their access to the service has been provided.

We are told that more seniors will receive care, but the budget is being cut. To put it simply, the government has some explaining to do and some evidence to provide if we are to believe that care is going to be maintained.

Currently, the annual billing from the designated physiotherapy clinics, the DPCs, is approximately \$200 million per year. When these changes take effect, the government has indicated that their new plan will have an annual budget of \$156 million. That's \$44 million less.

The DPC Association has challenged these numbers. The DPCA tells us that currently \$110 million is spent on physiotherapy in long-term care alone, and this will be cut to \$68.5 million under the government's new plan. This is the very plan that the minister assured us would continue to provide the same level of care for seniors.

The minister said in his answer, "Ontario will provide more than 200,000 additional seniors with one-on-one physiotherapy." But where is that physiotherapy going to take place?

Just last Friday, I met with a group of Hamilton physiotherapists, and what I learned at that meeting was absolutely shocking. They have informed me that the residents at Macassa Lodge, a long-term-care home in my riding, will no longer receive the same level of services in their home.

The minister said that this one-on-one physiotherapy "will be provided in long-term-care homes and local community centres," but the residents are being told to go out into the community to find a community centre that offers physiotherapy. They're fearful of what this will mean for seniors who have shown great success in these programs. They're hopeful that this government will change its approach and restore full in-home service for these seniors.

Many of these seniors rely on this service in their home. They're unable to travel great distances, and some of them are unable to travel at all. Last week, I quoted Barb Wyatt, who said, "If this program is cancelled, I have no other choice; I don't drive and I can't afford public transit that frequently."

It's physio that is keeping them comfortable in their life. Seniors who needed to be lifted out of bed to use the washroom now find themselves with enough strength to go on their own, without assistance. Seniors who have had bad balance are now able to walk confidently and safely. Seniors who were unable to pull themselves out of a chair now find themselves able to walk.

Last week I quoted Dorothy, and will do so again: "They just gave us this program to keep us healthy and in shape, and a couple of months later it's ripped from beneath us."

If the government seriously believes that access to physiotherapy will continue in the same way, we need to see the full plan. While there are probably positive aspects to this overall plan, the government has refused to provide details on the new system and how the system will be maintained for the clients.

The bottom line is simple: Ontarians who are receiving this service today should continue to have full and uninterrupted access to these services. The government needs to release a detailed plan as soon as possible so that seniors will be able to be reassured that services that they rely on will be there for them.

We owe it to the people who built this province, and New Democrats will continue to pressure the government on this issue, to ensure that no senior is left behind. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'm delighted to put in my five minutes in response to the member from Hamilton Mountain. Of course, I can appreciate that she's advocating on behalf of her people, and why not? She was elected to do exactly that, even though the figures that she has given out differ with the ones I have and the ones that I'm sure the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will provide.

Let me say that I am first of all delighted with the hard work that the Minister of Health has been putting in, making some changes and bringing in some reforms to the entire health care system. This is one aspect. Given the fact—and I hope that the member understands the difference between my responsibility representing seniors in retirement homes and those living in long-term care, who fall within the Ministry of Health, represented by the minister herself, who is here tonight. There is quite a difference. They don't fall within my own ministry.

Let me say that I'm very delighted that the minister has been working so hard to bring this change and this reform. It's exactly to the point that the member from Hamilton Mountain has said, that we don't want to see anyone who is in need of receiving this service or any other service left behind.

We are dealing with a system that is so antiquated—never been touched, never been changed since the early 1970s. This has been a service that has been provided to our people since the 1970s. Why the changes now? It's exactly to the point that the wonderful member from Hamilton Mountain has made: We want to provide this kind of service, and more, to more people, to more seniors throughout Ontario, as much as possible.

I don't have to tell you, Speaker, or the members of the House, that presently we are dealing with 92 providers, if my memory serves me well, for the whole of Ontario—for the full Ontario. I think it's about time—and of course, during this year, our population has increased. I don't have to tell you that the seniors' population is increasing on a daily basis. It is my responsibility to see that the seniors living in retirement homes receive the care they need so they can live not only more independently, but longer and healthier, and remain engaged and active as long as possible. I'm sure that not only I, but every member of this House, including the member from Hamilton Mountain, would like to see more seniors receiving all the benefits that the Minister of Health has recently announced.

I don't see any difference between the seniors in Sault Ste. Marie, where we have two clinics—the only two clinics serving northern Ontario and both of them are in Sault Ste. Marie. I don't think that's fair. I don't think that's right. I don't think this is serving the wider senior population or all the other populations throughout northern Ontario, and it's about time that we make some changes for the better.

For that, I have to say that I'm delighted that the minister has brought these particular changes. I have so much to say, and in five minutes I just can't. So I hope that in the future, we will have some other occasions.

Presently, Madam Speaker, we have approximately 215,000 people accessing this particular service. Now, with this change, we will have an additional 218,000 people getting access to this particular service, for a total of about 500,000 people. The reason why the minister has brought these particular changes—and the changes will affect all other people as well, not only in retirement homes or long-term homes—is because we want to make sure we can reach as many seniors and non-seniors as possible throughout Ontario.

I think it's about time that we make some changes to this antiquated system since the early 1970s. Madam Speaker, I'm delighted that we're speaking about it and that the minister has brought these changes to the system. I thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member as well.

1810

LABOUR DISPUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand—Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of Labour. The member has up to five minutes to make his remarks.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I asked for this late-show debate. I felt the Minister of Labour didn't have time to fully answer some of my questions about the lockout of Steelworkers down at Nanticoke.

This is important. We have to be cognizant of the value, the importance and the benefits of the steel industry, its customers, its suppliers, the people who work down there and the community that it supports. All must strive for productivity and value-added economic activity.

I ask this government to recognize the significance of the direct and indirect employment from Nanticoke and Hamilton and for hundreds of miles in that area. Don't forget the value chains. Going backwards: iron ore, coal, the scrap industry; and going forward: the end use, the distribution, the trucking, the value-added engineering. These are all jobs that are threatened by this lockout.

Public policy should be key. It certainly is with other jurisdictions which impact steel production. There are obviously economic consequences of any labour dispute: a loss or reduction of production.

I'm not a steel man, but I used to be, in American Can Workers Local 25. I was also a consultant at Nanticoke. I

helped Steelworkers 8782—Stelco—set up their employee assistance program.

We understand that Canada settled its bitter three-year lawsuit against US Steel—an investment of something in the order of \$50 million at both Hamilton and Lake Erie. I haven't seen the paperwork. That might be something our Minister of Labour could inquire about.

This is the third lockout in three years—the last time at Hamilton, with an estimated loss of \$25 million in wages. This is the second lockout at Lake Erie in three years.

We're asking, what did the government do the last time? What did you learn last time? What has the mediator accomplished? I'm told his role could not be divulged to me.

Specifically, Minister, what are you doing? Have you talked to the company? I've talked to the company. Have you spoken with the union? I have.

We recognize the steel industry—we recognize the consolidation, the globalization—dramatic changes in the last 10 years. It comes with loss of local ownership, local control. There are gains—gains in managerial expertise, new technology, pools of capital, and resultant savings—but it comes at a price: intense competition between mills to garner investments with respect to some of their projects, all directed from the head office.

Labour disruptions can benefit other mills within the same company. Hamilton and Lake Erie are shut down. How does that benefit Gary, Indiana? I've been down to Gary—massive steel operations down there. They want to keep them running.

So there's a necessity to frame public policy—obviously, provincial labour legislation that can best support future investment and try to avoid some of these tragedies and work for success all year around.

I visited the line on Mother's Day. It was after midnight. There was a cold wind coming off Lake Erie. It's tough stuff down there. There really has to be a better way beyond burn barrels.

There has to be more of an alliance between management, the workers—obviously, suppliers who are dealing with the threat of China. They make steel in Brazil, Russia, India.

When we come out of this recession, there's a potential for demand—steel for that Windsor bridge, for culverts, for so much of our electrical infrastructure—but labour relations seem to get in the way. This is where this Ontario government needs to come in. I need to know, what is the minister doing to get Steelworkers back to work? I'm asking, can you pull people together? Can you have a meeting locally? Can you go to Pittsburgh? Can you go to Washington? Talk to the union; talk to the international union; talk to the international company.

Things have changed. This government has to keep up. This government has to reinvent its ways of dealing with these kinds of situations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for the opportunity to speak further on this issue and for raising the points that he's raised today.

Speaker, some negotiations can be very challenging, especially when they take place in the public eye. We recognize that at times the collective bargaining process can be difficult on the worker, their family and the community. That's why we have worked very hard over the past nine years to restore fairness, balance, dignity and productivity to labour relations in Ontario. I'm proud that 97% of labour contracts in Ontario are now settled without disruption—97% are now settled without disruption. I'm proud of the work everyone in Ontario did to get us through the last recession. I want to commend those who represent employers and unions at the negotiating table who work together to develop an agreement that reflects the needs of both parties.

Agreements reached at the negotiating table are the best agreements. They are the most stable agreements and the most productive ones. As for this exact lockout or other labour disputes, it is ultimately the responsibility of the employer and the union to resolve their differences at the bargaining table. As you must know, the role of the Ministry of Labour in the collective bargaining process is not to intervene and dictate outcomes but to help facilitate a solution. During labour disputes, our government is focused on assisting the parties with the collective bargaining process. It's a shared responsibility. We have a highly skilled mediation team with a tremendous record for helping to resolve disputes. They work tirelessly to bring the parties together and help find the common ground which leads to healthy negotiations.

In his original question, the member opposite mentioned previous lockouts in this particular factory. Prior to the lockout in 2009, a Ministry of Labour mediator met with the parties four times to assist at the bargaining table. During the last round of bargaining, a Ministry of Labour mediator met with the parties roughly seven different times. Most recently, during this set of negotiations, a Ministry of Labour mediator has been assisting the parties at the bargaining table. In fact, they have met with the parties on seven different occasions to help with the negotiation process.

Our mediators, as with all other negotiations, are working tirelessly to assist the parties at the table. I encourage the parties to make every effort to return to the bargaining table; and of course Ministry of Labour mediators are available to help facilitate, help mediate that conversation.

Now, Speaker, what's concerning is the approach that the party opposite continues to raise, and that is their right-to-work-for-less strategy. We know that approach does not work. The member opposite is presenting a road map that takes Ontario workers on a race to the bottom. We saw it in their white paper, and we are seeing it in the Legislature with the three bills recently reintroduced by the PC labour critic, the MPP for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. These bills call for varying amendments to the Labour Relations Act that seek to violently disrupt the delicate balance we have created in labour relations. The schemes presented by the official opposition would mean lower wages and, in turn, a reduced buying power, which would have a dramatically negative effect on the economy.

This path to poverty would destroy the balanced and productive labour climate we have worked so hard to achieve and would quickly lead to further labour strife. It would also lead on average to a \$1,500 annual pay cut for both unionized and non-unionized workers across the province.

In Ontario, we are proud of the standard of living we have for our workers, as well as the level of investment we continue to attract to the province. So I ask the member to stop advocating for a system that will take Ontario workers on a race to the bottom and instead to ensure that we are focusing on the robust labour relations system that we have in place.

Particularly in this instance, with this lockout, I would again encourage parties to come back to the table. We as the Ministry of Labour are available to help mediate an agreement which will work in the best interests of both parties and the community.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1820.

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Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
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**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
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Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 May 2013

Mercredi 15 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Good morning, everyone. I have two words for those of a certain age in this chamber when talking about consumer rights, and those two words are Vic Tanny's. Anybody remember Vic Tanny's?

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Remember Vic Tanny's? You're looking at a woman who had a lifetime membership to Vic Tanny's. I took that out about a month before the place closed down.

I also bought a beautiful dining room table. It had some flaws in the wood that appeared over time. It also had a lifetime warranty. The place that made it closed down. What can I say: consumer rights in Ontario over history.

This bill deals with consumer rights. It makes some small steps forward for those who are besieged by water heater salespeople, debt settlement agencies and real estate brokers. One wonders why energy marketers aren't in the mix, because that's where we receive—certainly in my office—the greatest number of complaints.

As usual with most Liberal government bills, it doesn't go far enough—we can amend that in committee—but I hesitate to really go full scale in attack mode, as I think some of my colleagues have done, on those who come

door to door and try to sell us things. I'm also the daughter of a father who, during the Great Depression, the only job he could get was selling vacuum cleaners door to door. Quite frankly, we in this chamber all knock on people's doors and engage in telemarketing. So again, I hesitate to go full scale anti those who have to do that for a living.

Tough times call for all sorts of jobs, and many people have had to do that, including our own children. I remember that my daughter worked for a student painting company, where she went and knocked on doors to sell contracts. And hey, I just joined up with Greenpeace, a wonderful organization. How did I join up? Again, because they knocked on my door. So let's not attack small business here. Let's not attack those who try to make a go of it. It's hard enough to get small business done. However, of course, we need protection against those who would assail us unscrupulously.

I had a constituent come to me and talk about debt resettlement, who said, "I did a consumer plan through a debt resettlement company where I'm paying back"—she owed a great deal of money to a great deal of places—at usurious interest rates, I might add—on credit cards and other loans. She went to debt resettlement and they came up with a consumer plan. But this young woman was so in over her head, owed so much money, that even with a repayment plan that essentially robbed her of her right to access to credit at all, she would be in debt for a long, long time.

I said, "Did they discuss bankruptcy with you?" She said, "Well, they discussed bankruptcy with me but I couldn't afford to go bankrupt." There's a concept that only Ontarians may understand fully: She couldn't afford to go bankrupt. Why could she not afford to go bankrupt? Because the fee that the debt resettlement company was going to charge her was more than she could afford. This is absurd. I think, Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, it's absurd. Here are folk who are already in debt; they're coming to an agency for help. The agency can give them help if they so wish. Sometimes they do, but charging huge fees up front to give that help is quite frankly unethical—it's unethical.

This bill goes some small way towards rectifying that. The sad reality is, of course, that the punishment here doesn't really quite fit the crime. Taking away licences—you know what that means: That means that 12345 Inc. opens up again as 891011 Inc. Really, there have to be some serious consequences for those who engage in robbing—and that's what they're doing: robbing the public.

I, along with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, a couple of years back actually talked and delivered a two-party bill to this assembly dealing with franchisees who were losing their life savings, particularly in racialized communities, because they had invested with a franchisor who was less than scrupulous. We're not talking about the costs of water heaters here, or hundreds of dollars for debt resettlement; we are actually talking about tens of thousands, in some instances, where again, innocent victims invest in franchisor schemes and really never get their money's worth. In fact, some of them simply leave the country, and they're left holding the debt and none of the proceeds for that investment.

The problem here—and the problem in fact across the board—is, what do you do when this happens to you? What do you do if you are the victim of someone unscrupulous who has just stolen a great amount of money from you? You can go to the Minister of Consumer Services and you'll probably get a sympathetic ear, but that's not going to get your money back. The only recourse left to most people in Ontario is the civil court system. Quite frankly, that's the recourse that most people have, and that's it. That's only available to those with money. So here you are, you've invested \$25,000 in a franchise that never panned out, you lose your life savings, and you want to go after the person. He may live down the street from you, but to go after him you have to hire a lawyer, and you have to invest thousands of dollars just to go after him to try to recoup what you've already lost. This makes no sense.

So what do we need? What do we really need? We really need a consumer advocate; that's what we need, Mr. Speaker. We need somebody who is going to go to bat for those who get robbed by anybody, whether it's a water heater, whether it's a gym membership, whether it's a table manufacturer, whether it's debt resettlement—somebody who's going to stand up for you. You need that; you absolutely need it.

0910

What else do you need? You need to be able to access the legal system and you need to be able to do that at an affordable price. This means an expansion of legal aid so that folk who can't otherwise afford to hire a lawyer could actually get some legal representation if they're trying to go after somebody who has stolen from them.

We also need some real repercussions for those who engage in this kind of practice. We don't only need to take their licence away; we need fines that are substantial. We need to actually impose those fines and collect them. We need to go after these people and make sure they don't just reopen under another name somewhere else. We need to do that too.

By the way, one of the greatest consumer frauds happening right now is in the development sphere. Just the other night I was at a meeting in my riding that was organized against a 30-storey tower or two right at the edge of High Park. This is an abomination to all those who live there. Over 100 people at this meeting all wanted a say in the kind of development that was going to happen

in their neighbourhood, and guess what? Guess what? They're not going to get it, because the developers have deep pockets. They can hire lawyers and city planners, and they can actually go all the way to the Ontario Municipal Board, fight and win there against a group of community activists who are taking a day off work and have no resources.

This is the kind of true fraud that's perpetrated across the entire city of Toronto. We in the New Democratic Party have demanded, in fact, that the OMB get out of Toronto affairs, that it not be there. We have a planning department; we have an appeal process. Why are they there in the beginning? They're the last bastion for scoundrels in the development area in Toronto. So there's a huge area that's not addressed by this. But certainly, again, as far as it goes, it's a little step, a dainty, little step forward in the right direction, which we're hoping to strengthen at committee and which needs to be strengthened.

In terms of the real estate part of this, it's very strange. I don't quite understand why the Liberal government is going after real estate agents, but who knows? Maybe there is something in it for them. I guess we'll find that out at committee as well. I wish they'd go after the OMB and go after, again, the kind of legitimized scoundrels who are really wreaking havoc in some of our neighbourhoods.

To sum up, think twice before you invest in lifetime memberships in anything. Think twice before you buy anything with a lifetime guarantee; chances are, it's not. Work to strengthen this bill and, my goodness, work to strengthen consumer protection, period, across Ontario, because we have so precious little of it. We need way, way more; way more than this bill can provide, way more than is even envisaged by this government, including getting rid of the OMB in Toronto affairs. So I'm looking forward to the committee; I'm looking forward to strengthening this. And again, don't buy anything with a lifetime guarantee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to follow my friend and colleague from Parkdale–High Park. While it is not the subject of this bill, I certainly share her antipathy toward the Ontario Municipal Board.

But let's talk about what's in this bill. What's in the bill is a series of measures aimed at helping consumers with regard to door-to-door sales and protecting them from some of the naked abuses these days in door-to-door sales. We've all encountered it. It seems to happen around dinnertime.

The one I enjoyed was the guy who came and tried to sell me energy services. He kept going on about how the government required him to do this. I looked down, and all of the things that seemed to be there were there. There were very nice plastic-laminated tags; everything was all colour coordinated. But it was all phonier than a \$3 bill. Finally, I brought out my legislative ID card, because I just gotten home, and I said, "Excuse me, I am the government," and he turned tail and ran.

That gives you an idea of just how naked the abuses are these days in door-to-door sales. What does this bill do? It's going to prohibit upfront fees before services are rendered. It limits the amount of fees. It requires something we don't have now: clear contract disclosures. And it prohibits misleading sales practices and misleading advertising, because some of it is not just misleading; it's an out-and-out lie.

There's very strong evidence these days of harmful practices used by companies that offer debt settlement services. Believe it or not, at the moment there's not a lot of legislation governing misleading or predatory practices in debt settlement services. This bill is going to fix that.

In other types of door-to-door sales, this bill contains important measures that restore sanity and fairness to the marketplace, and we should get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened very carefully to the member from Parkdale–High Park, and I would say this bill does address some of the consumer issues and consumer protection issues. I think, more importantly, she spoke with some detail and more passion on the part dealing with the collections and debt settlement services. I tend to agree.

Now, I would say that, in Ontario today, the biggest debt and problem for most homeowners—especially seniors—is the extraordinarily expensive energy bills that people are getting. In fact, right now, if you can't pay your energy bill they'll shut the power off. If they shut the power off, first of all there's a disconnect fee, there's a reconnect fee, and then there's a—you have to give the utility a down payment or at least a letter of credit of some sort. So this government could do a lot more without this bill to affect the consumers of Ontario—protecting the consumers of Ontario—by making life more affordable.

If I look at even filling up the car with gas today—there's a good example. We get a lot of complaints in the riding about the price of gas. When they added the HST to the gas, that was about 10 cents or 12 cents a litre overnight when they harmonized the HST, just on the tax increase of the provincial portion of the HST—eight cents per dollar. If gas is \$1.50, that's 12 cents. That's 12 cents overnight on the price of gas.

I don't dispute that this bill has three sections, and the three sections are dealing with the consumer protection with respect to the door-to-door salespersons, the people aggressively selling hot water heaters or whatever else they are selling you at the door. I think the cooling-off period is a good idea. I would say the real estate industry—I'm supportive of the industry; it's regulated—but by providing some clearness that there can't be fees and commissions, those are appropriate covers for consumers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: Ça me fait plaisir de rejoindre le débat ce matin. Ma collègue de Parkdale–High Park a

vraiment indiqué de bons points dans son discours où elle a apporté son point de vue du coin de sa région. Puis c'est de quoi qu'on devrait tout le temps apprécier dans la Chambre : de regarder d'où ces points de vue-là viennent et comment ça peut protéger les consommateurs.

Je veux juste rajouter à ce que mon collègue de Durham a indiqué sur les prix d'hydro. Oui, c'est vrai. Quand on regarde à vraiment trouver des mesures qui ne sont pas incluses dans ce projet de loi pour vraiment aider nos aînés et puis les personnes dans nos communautés, il faut vraiment qu'on regarde les décisions qui ont été faites dans le temps sur la TVH. Le soleil s'est couché et le lendemain matin les gens se sont levés et puis ont trouvé une augmentation ridicule, en fait, sur les prix des consommateurs. Et puis c'est vraiment ce que réellement il faudrait qu'on regarde.

Dans ce projet de loi, oui, il y a de bonnes étapes. Oui, il y a de bonnes mesures pour commencer la discussion et pour vraiment trouver une façon de protéger nos gens. C'est une bonne étape, mais il faut qu'on regarde aussi à implémenter des étapes où on voit qu'elles ont démontré du succès.

Pour vous donner un exemple, monsieur le Président, dans les communautés autochtones ils ont développé un genre de loi, un genre de politique où, avant qu'un vendeur de produits vienne dans leur communauté, il faut qu'il s'adresse au conseil; il faut qu'il s'adresse au chef de la communauté autochtone et lui demande avant de se présenter dans la communauté pour venir à bout de vendre ses produits. Et puis si ça ne se rend pas place, il ne peut pas rentrer. S'il rentre sans la permission du chef, de cette façon-là, les ventes sont plus ou moins éliminées.

On a eu beaucoup de succès dans mon bureau, à mon office. Ce sont ces idées mêmes qu'on peut retrouver et qu'on peut vraiment implémenter dans ce projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci beaucoup. The minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair. We know that we are going to have a good day today.

I have to say that I appreciate the comment by the member from Parkdale–High Park, and I have to totally agree that I think this bill should travel to committee and make it even stronger. I think the intent of the bill is excellent. I'm very pleased that the minister has—she acted very quickly in bringing this piece of legislation to the House here, but I think the member is quite right: Let's move it on to the committee and let's get more information; let's bring it back; let's bring a better bill. I think the best thing we can do is give more protection for our consumers, for our people. I will be speaking on it shortly and I will address some of the issues that I've been facing.

0920

One of the comments that the member made—she doesn't know why there's a real estate portion. Again, it's the same thing, like all the others: protecting consumers. When you have a greedy real estate agent and

brokers who, for the sake of making a bit more commission, if you will, or getting more money for the vendor at the expense of other people—they've been causing a really serious problem on the market.

At the end, it is protecting the consumers who are there in the various fields. It doesn't matter who; it doesn't matter in what form. They are still our consumers. I think it's good to see this bill here. It does a number of things. I hope that we can expand on it and include lots of other things. I have some examples that I'm going to give during my few minutes later on, and I look forward to that. I commend the member for her remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, everyone who had input. Certainly one of the things I would say to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville is: Exactly. Why aren't energy retailers included in this bill? Energy retailers surely are the ones we get the most complaints about.

Again, I go back to how we're the only province, I think we can say, where it costs too much for some folk to go bankrupt. This is an absurdity, but it's a reality. This bill makes some small steps. It needs to make bigger ones. It needs to have more repercussions on those who actually commit this kind of fraud.

Finally, something I didn't have a chance to speak about but is critically important in terms of consumer protection is payday lenders. Payday lenders are the scourge of this province. They charge over 500% interest. I tabled a bill a few years back to limit the interest charged to 35%. It had the backing of a great many consumer advocates. It is, in fact, the law in Quebec. That's why in Quebec they do not have payday lenders. If we really want to protect consumers, we would actually do the protection where it hits the most vulnerable. It hits the most vulnerable, with payday lenders who are springing up everywhere across the city and who—let's face it—only those who have no other resources go to. It's essentially legalized usury. The government knows that; we know it. We need to do way more about that.

Consumer protection, as far as it goes—yes, it's fine. Let's make it stronger. Let's make the repercussions more serious. But let's also look at the bigger picture of consumer protection in this province, and the best place to start is by shutting down all the payday lenders and actually allowing people to get out of debt in the first place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure. Onward and onward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have a few minutes to address some of the content of this proposed legislation. We are dealing with Bill 55; it's called, properly, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013.

Let me say, first of all, that I'm delighted to debate this particular piece of legislation. I have to compliment the Minister of Consumer Services for bringing it

forward quite expeditiously. I think it's high time. It's needed. I think the people we serve are very happy to see this piece of legislation coming through.

I have to say that if we lived in a perfect world, when we had a good piece of legislation like this one here we would immediately send it forward and do our very best to approve it as quickly as possible. At the same time, often we get not-so-nice pieces of legislation and we should do away with those pieces of legislation expeditiously as well. But reality sinks in and we are not living in a perfect world. We have to do what we have to do. I hope that the democratic process will take place and we'll send this bill to the proper committee and bring it back, hopefully, with some good amendments strengthening the bill and strengthening protection for our consumers.

I have a very active constituency, and part of this very active constituency is composed of many, many seniors. I don't have to tell you, Speaker, that one of the big problems that we have—it's not a problem, but it's a concern in Ontario here—is that some 35% of our senior population does not speak any of the two official languages, neither French nor English. Those are very vulnerable people.

Just to show how bad it is out there, on two particular occasions I happened to be home and my wife answered the bell. She goes and she's there talking for quite a while. It happened to be a young man. So I went to the door myself and I said, "What's up?" "This man wants to come in and he wants to inspect the hot water tank." The young man showed me the name tag. I looked at him and I said, "I don't think it's necessary. I don't think we have to. We have a fairly new furnace, a fairly new"—"I have to come in and take a look at your water tank." I said, "No, you don't have to. I thank you very much." "But I have to. I've been told by the company that we have to do this service." I said, "No. Thank you very much." So my wife is looking at me like, why am I treating this young man a bit harshly? I said, "I'm sorry. We know what we're doing and we don't have to have you in to take a look at the water tank." So he left—murmuring, but he left. This was one of the occasions.

One of the bad ones, Speaker, again comes from this active constituency that I have. Friday mornings I usually reserve for seeing constituents who want to speak to their local member. I have these two ladies, middle-aged if you will. They come in. One was smiling and the other one was very serious. So I said, "What can we do for you?" One says, "I have a problem," and the other one starts to laugh. I said, "Okay, who has the problem: the one laughing, or the one who is more serious?" She said, "Look, we have two contracts here bearing the signature of my husband. Why I am so upset"—and the other one is still laughing—"is because my husband passed away 10 years ago. There's no way that my husband has signed this particular contract." It was from one of the gas companies. As with many others that we receive from time to time, we managed to have it cancelled, but it took some time, and I wonder how many other people are out there

who are being taken. They may not be aware, and they keep on going and they get ripped off. I don't think that's fair.

I think this bill goes a long way in providing some protection for our consumers. Sometime even ourselves, Speaker—and I have to give you this example, because there could be other people out there who very innocently will be taken, and then they will have to suffer the consequences. As the member from Parkdale–High Park said, once it happens, what are you going to do? Are you going to go to court? Last year we made some changes to the patio. Our house is an older house; we have a little patio there with some pressure-treated wood, and some of the planks were quite old and cracked. We decided to change some of those. We had this acquaintance we knew, this contractor, and we didn't get anything in writing, I have to say. I'm ashamed to say, but we did it because we trusted the person. Maybe if there is a solution, some member of the House or someone listening there can tell me what to do. But he changed some of the two-by-fours, pressure-treated wood. What happened—and you would think that someone doing that type of work would know what kind of wood they have to buy. The wood was very fresh. What happened immediately after the installation? With the hot weather, the sap started to come out, so we couldn't use the sap anymore; it was just impossible. I have tried everything to make sure the sap wouldn't come up anymore—nothing doing. So I still have a problem; I still have to decide what I'm going to do with it. Perhaps I'll get cement. I may have to get it done again and have well-seasoned pressure-treated wood.

But addressing the bill itself, Speaker—

Hon. Jeff Leal: You should get the Speaker to help you. He's just built a home.

0930

Hon. Mario Sergio: I hope so—anyone with some knowledge of what to do, because it is a shame. I felt bad to go back to the guy, because, as I said, if he knew better, he wouldn't have done it. Like the member from Parkdale–High Park said, “Well, now that you've got it, what are you going to do about it?” It's one of those things. I have to live with it; I've got to make some changes, probably some more expenses, but I have to find a remedy.

But the bill that is in front of us is a good bill for protection for our consumers, for the people of Ontario. As I said before, I feel sorry, especially for a lot of our seniors, that they have difficulty. Sometimes they feel much compassion when somebody comes to the door, and it's very nice when they offer some help. They may not know; they do not understand.

A young lady came one day, a Saturday afternoon, and she spoke with respect to conserving energy and whatever; she gave me the big spiel. She said, “We are giving a dozen light bulbs once you sign the contract.” I said that's very nice, that's a nice incentive, but I said, we really don't need it. “You mean you don't want to take some freebies from the company?” I said, “I love your offer, but we really don't need it.”

They come with all kinds of ideas, all kinds of scams, and how many people are not prepared to be aware that we do have people—and we have people out there who want to make a living. This is the sad part. Sometimes, while they try to make a living, other people are being scammed, and we have to be very careful. It is our responsibility to see that our people are not ripped off and that the proper contract gets signed. So I'm glad to see the door-to-door sales and especially the debt settlement services as well—this has been a big issue for a long time.

I think I have mentioned very briefly a bit on the real estate side. I hope that we can do something because it can be very traumatic, especially for a young couple, when they drive around. They put in all kinds of offers, and they say, “You know, we are sick and tired of playing the game.” They may even pull out from the market or they end up even getting ripped off even more in some cases.

It's good to see the legislation here. I do hope that, indeed, it will go to committee quickly. I hope that we will have a good consultation from the public, from stakeholders, and bring it back quickly, as soon as possible, and enforce it on behalf of the consumers that we are trying to serve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to commend the member from York West on a very interesting speech and touching on some very important and real situations, especially 35% of the people in this country have immigrated here and have trouble with the English language, or French even. For them to speak to somebody at the door who would be selling them a product or a service—or even debt settlement situations, but more commonly a salesman at the door—they could be somewhat vulnerable. I guess what I would say is generally most of those folks, I feel, are pretty sharp people. They had the initiative and ability to immigrate to this country, which is a major challenge. So they have their faculties with them. Even with language troubles, I would suggest that they're not without the means to make a decision and accept the responsibility for what they're doing.

We do live in a free country. We have to remember that, within this democracy and the freedoms that we offer—which is what's wonderful about Canada—you have the right to succeed and enjoy all the benefits of success, but you also have to accept the responsibility that there could be failure resulting from bad decisions. Most of us realize that, as mature adults in a free country, we want that opportunity to succeed, and we accept the responsibility that there could be failure.

I think that through education we can inform people that they have to be responsible for themselves, that there could be unscrupulous people knocking on their doors, offering them services that are inappropriate or too expensive, or something that's wrong. I think there are other ways than just legislation in helping people who are vulnerable to be protected from the odd person who might be unscrupulous, shall we say.

At the same time, I think we have to acknowledge that most salespeople are well-intentioned, good and honourable people. They're trying to make a living. They can't make a living unless they have a good reputation and are well thought of in their community, otherwise their career would be over very quickly. So we must be careful not to condemn a worthy industry that provides a good service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to stand in response to the minister responsible for seniors. He absolutely made some really great points.

I know, myself, when I was an assistant to a city councillor, the many calls that I received from folks who had to deal with Direct Energy. I have to say, I hope that when we get to committee we can make sure we're putting energy into this bill, because the calls that I received about people who knocked on the doors and had seniors signing contracts, people who didn't speak very good English signing contracts—it was a major issue. This bill would protect them. But we need to really see that direct energy focused in here on this bill.

I was very fortunate to be able to get a lot of seniors off these contracts because they were seniors. But for folks who don't speak English very well, they didn't have that ability. There was no piece in the contract that said if a person wasn't able to understand correctly, then they would be given a second chance and be allowed out of it. Seniors do have that ability, so I'm happy to see that.

People knocking on doors—you know, everybody does need to make a living. Door-to-door sales is an important part, it's part of history, it's what folks have been doing for many years. But making those phone calls and making those appointments beforehand, I think, are a crucial part of that decision. That would only protect consumers further, by knowing that if someone does show up at their door, they shouldn't be allowing them in because there was no appointment made previously. We need to make sure that our seniors and our citizens are safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First let me say that I'm very pleased this morning that we still have our beloved Ottawa Senators in the game. Thank you for allowing me to say this.

Back on Bill 55: It's amazing that in 2012 the ministry received over 3,200 complaints and inquiries on water heater rentals, which continues to rank number two on the ministry's top 10 complaints list.

I just want to thank the member from York West, the minister for seniors, for his presentation. My advice to the Ontarians who are listening to us this morning is never, never, never sign anything that is presented to you at the door. Take the contract, take the time to read it. You know that you have time to cancel it after. But never, never sign anything.

Currently, the Consumer Protection Act only has limited protection for consumers with regard to door-to-door water heater rentals. This legislation proposes a change, with better consumer protection for door-to-door sales of water heater rentals: It requires plain language. It prohibits delivery during an extended 20 days—because they wanted to come in the next morning to install it—so now the consumer will be protected. It provides stronger consumer remedies when these rules are breached, so you can cancel the contract. It requires mandatory recorded verification calls of key terms in contracts.

All of this needs to go to committee as soon as possible to make sure that Ontarians are protected.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to respond to the minister responsible for seniors' commentary today. I certainly hope that his skills as a minister are far superior to those as a handyman. Those stories, I think are obviously much—one of the things I like about this legislation, if I can be totally frank, is that everybody has a story about a time where they had wished, perhaps, that the consumer protection legislation was much more robust than it is. I think people have to navigate and, certainly as the Minister for Correctional Services alluded to, there has to be some degree of trust, which is at stake here.

From my perspective as well, Mr. Speaker, I think that an element of competition, where people are able to choose from a variety of providers, will not only ensure that a company can meet the best price for consumers, but also customer service factors in when consumers choose to go with a company or not.

Interestingly enough I had that constituent talk to me very recently about consumer protection legislation in the province of Ontario. His name is Ryan Smythe from Cambridge. He talked about how there is sporadic consumer protection with respect to return policies of products in Ontario. He was looking at other jurisdictions and modelling what we should do in Ontario after other jurisdictions. It just goes to show, Mr. Speaker, that people are actually talking about these sorts of things.

I think it is one of the responsibilities of legislators to come up with ways to protect consumers. From that perspective, I hope to contribute further to this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister responsible for seniors has two minutes.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank all members who made a contribution to the bill: the member from Cambridge; the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services; the members from Hamilton Mountain and Carleton-Mississippi Mills, as well, Speaker.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills is quite right: An older person, even though older, should have the knowledge of the "buyer beware" situation. But of course, Speaker, when I came to Canada—back in the 1950s and 1960s, we used to leave our car open in the driveway with the keys inside and our house door open—nothing would ever happen. But we are not living in that world

anymore; things have changed. Therefore, I think we have to be a bit more aware. We agree with that.

Let me say, Speaker, and I want to correct my record here: When I said 35% of the 55-plus speak no official language, actually it's 37%. Just to say a bit more, 68% of 55-plus are immigrants as well. Why do I say this? I think we are known as Canadians to be very affable, very trustworthy people. Sometimes, even though now it's changing, the views and mentalities are changing, we are still the type of people very trustworthy, gullible, and sometimes we do get taken.

I take the advice from my colleague, the Minister of Education; she has had some experience. I'm looking for some advice on how to get rid of my particular situation, but one of the good things in the bill is: no installation, no delivery of services whatsoever, within 20 days, for 20 days. I think this gives some time to consumers to think about what they have just signed, probably.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 55, Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers, and also to follow the minister responsible for seniors in this debate—a true gentleman.

All too often, those in good standing in many professions are marred by a few bad apples that tend to sour consumers. As politicians, I think we can all sympathize with this reality. But it's also important to set up rules across the board that are proactive, not simply react to the hot issue of the day. This bill is, in my opinion, yet another knee-jerk reaction following in the footsteps of some of the other Liberal bills, such as the Local Food Act and Wireless Services Agreements Act, which are somewhat light in substance. But watching this bill get introduced, I feel like I'm watching CBC's Marketplace: every week a new exposé on a shady practice that is hurting Ontario consumers. This episode it's water heaters; next it'll be wireless bills. While it makes for entertaining and informative television, it may not be the proper way to enact legislation.

Firstly, Bill 55 seeks to tackle the topical problem of door-to-door water heater sales. Getting tough on door-to-door sales is an easy thing for folks in this province to rally around. We've all had the unpleasant experience of a salesman stopping by, using high-pressure tactics such as asking to see your bills. Never, ever let them see your bills. They usually come at dinnertime. Maybe we should amend this bill to stop them from showing up at dinner. Maybe they're hungry and they want to be invited in. But in all seriousness, there are many concerns with this industry.

A recent report by the Homeowner Protection Centre outlined the key problems that currently plague the industry right here in Ontario. It's a thorough report, and it appears that the ministry didn't read it, as this bill misses several of its recommendations. In their report it was found that Ontario water heater renters often are not aware of the details of the rental. As we so often see in consumer issues, the real danger is when a person does not know what they are agreeing to.

Prior to my entering politics, I ran a successful training and development company for over 25 years. In that profession I also taught professional sales training, whereby individuals could in fact earn a professional designation in sales. Earning what I called the CMS, certified marketing sales designation, required not only study but a proven ability in salesmanship, which also involved honesty and integrity.

Speaking of which, let's talk about wind turbine sales reps. I heard earlier today about the discussion regarding energy sales reps. I'm not suggesting that all of the industrial wind turbine salespeople are unscrupulous, but unfortunately, in many instances, these particular reps approach members from my farming community with the hopes of walking away with a signed contract to install a few industrial turbines on a farmer's property, and they offer huge government-funded annual subsidies in exchange for co-operation. I've learned that if it's too good to be true, it usually is. What they don't tell you is that turbines will drive up energy costs. What they don't tell you is that they may create potential health concerns. And what they also don't tell you is that it will devalue properties. I was also taught in school, in Latin class, caveat emptor: buyer beware. If Ontario consumers were adequately protected across all industries and sales reps were required to be transparent, many farmers would not agree to these contracts.

Back to the bill, Mr. Speaker. The knowledge gap for rental heaters is of major concern. This bill does little to address this critical aspect. All contracts should be written and recorded, as the bill calls for, but moreover, they should also be written in plain language that the consumer can in fact understand. Further, this bill does not do enough to address the problems associated with cancelling a water heater rental agreement in this province. The bill doubles the cool-off period, meaning that a consumer has 20 days to opt out of a contract and get their money back. But as we know, consumers often do not understand water heater rental agreements in the first place, and may miss the cooling-off period. People rarely complain about a new agreement immediately after signing. They complain once they experience a problem. These usually occur after 20 days, and consumers would be left high and dry under this proposed legislation.

Some of the barriers that hinder consumers trying to cancel are high buyout fees, restrictive appliance return depot hours, and even instances where consumers calling companies and trying to cancel were put on hold for long periods of time or even dropped entirely. How does the cool-off period resolve these issues? This bill does provide a few positive changes for consumers, but it does fall somewhat short. Getting it to committee can hopefully create a stronger bill to protect the vulnerable consumers.

0950

Ontarians who are deep in debt are also vulnerable individuals. They feel that they have nowhere to turn, and often they look at debt repayment agencies as their only hope. Unfortunately, there are many who prey upon the less fortunate for a quick profit.

Advertisements for debt repayment agencies are all over the radio, television, Internet, and even through direct calls. I wouldn't be surprised if we started to see some come around Queen's Park, given how bad our provincial debt is.

In times of economic crisis, more and more Ontarians will be forced to turn to debt repayment agencies. The Ontario Association of Credit Counselling Services receives more than 100 complaints a month about debt settlement companies. Many more likely go unreported.

As it stands today, much of the risk for consumers occurs at the onset of the agreement as they are forced to hand over large service fees. This leaves consumers ripe for the picking. This bill would prohibit settlers from charging upfront fees, mandate that contracts be in writing and place a cap on the total amount of fees that can be charged. I hope this can help Ontarians who are in a very tough spot.

One of the more shocking concerns about debt settlement is that even after you enter an agreement with an agency as your chosen settler, you are the recipient of collection calls. Many people reach out for help in a desperate attempt to stop harassing calls from collection agencies. This bill does not address this concern.

How many years will pass while we try to crack down on businesses one by one? The Bibby family—Robert, Connie and Sydney from Chatham, my hometown—contracted out to have a new pole barn constructed. The project was valued at \$16,500. The contractor demanded \$15,500 upfront to purchase materials. I think all members in this House can see where I'm heading with this. Sure enough, the contractor never delivered or installed the new pole barn.

The diligent pursuit for answers by the Bibbys and other families led to consumer services of Ontario charging the contractor with nine counts of deceptive business practices and led to a settlement payment to local families. However, this settlement was much lower than the families had anticipated, as the company argued it didn't have the ability to pay.

We must ensure that there are, in fact, the proper regulatory tools to avoid these practices across a wide range of businesses. We must strive to achieve true consumer protection, like the Consumer Protection Statute Law Amendment Act, 2002, which was introduced by our leader, Tim Hudak, when he was the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. By broadening the scope, you're less likely to miss an industry and be forced to chase after them, one by one, as this government has been doing.

Showing their wisdom, the Bibbys emerged from this unfortunate affair with a number of solutions to help families avoid being scammed in the future. They suggested that companies should not be able to take more than 20% deposits upfront. This would help mitigate the damages incurred by families and individuals preyed upon by unsavory businesses.

Second, they feel the consumer should have the right to put liens on contractors for incomplete or non-started

projects, or for deposits to be returned with interest. In order to ensure proper documentation, we should enforce the issuing of receipts for values paid throughout the project.

Lastly, the appropriate penalties found in current legislation should actually be applied to those who disobey the code of conduct.

Instead of a patchwork of legislation aimed at solving the issue of the day, let's do more to lay a foundation to solve the problems of the future before they happen. We owe it to the families across this province, like the Bibbys, to ensure that all consumers are protected, not simply the ones dealing with industries that are in the news.

I do support this bill in principle, but in my opinion, it does require several amendments to make it even stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This morning and throughout the course of this debate, there's been a lot of discussion about energy retailers. There's a good reason for that. That's because—I mean, the rules and the regulations that are laid out in section 2 of this bill are modelled after those that had been applied to energy retailers in 2010, by this government, when they brought in some new rules to "protect energy consumers" that involved disclosing how the contract price the companies are offering compares to the price offered by the local utility, providing training programs to their staff to ensure that staff know, understand and abide by the new rules, and to cancel a consumer's contract without penalty in a number of circumstances; and to limit the cancellation fees that energy retailers can charge consumers.

Despite these changes, every quarter the Ontario Energy Board releases a top 10 list of complaints that are brought forward to the energy board, and some of the top complaints are miscellaneous contract issues; cancellation charges that are either being unfairly applied or are way too high; reaffirmation not taking place; the continued misrepresentation of the utility, where agents claim affiliation with the government utility or the Ontario Energy Board.

Really, what is happening is that we have rules and regulations that are in place to protect people against energy retailers, but they aren't working. I don't know that this is necessarily the model we should be using to protect consumers against other long-term contracts. We need to look at what's already in place. There need to be a number of reforms. We need to crack down on energy retailers and, further, we need to apply some serious reforms to the sale of water heaters as well.

This has a long way to go. I'll speak in my remarks later in greater detail about some of the other things I'd like to see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak about Bill 55, following my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

I love what our colleague from—what is his riding? Cambridge. He talked about how each one of us in this House has a story, but I think each one of us probably also has a nightmare story—because it isn't a good story. That's what we're trying to address.

I already spoke yesterday about the concern about consumer protection, because for a significant number of my constituents, English is a second language. Furthermore, this proposed legislation will help to address potential fraud and misreading the contract, and more importantly, it will protect them. We hear all these stories in the House now, but how do we get that message out to the community? That's our job in the Legislature.

I recognize some members opposite call it drive-by legislation, Mr. Speaker. We are intending to support and protect our residents, especially those who are the most vulnerable: the seniors in our ridings, the new Canadians in our ridings, and those for whom English is a second language. We also have a very high proportion of our constituents who are Canadian-born but who are illiterate in either English or French. Through this legislation, we will address the issue of making sure the contract is in clear language that they can understand—and the cooling-off period is really critical.

I was very pleased to hear my colleague from Hamilton Mountain talking about strengthening the bill when we get to committee, and to hear some of the great suggestions from all three parties coming forward.

More importantly, this is the right thing to do. We need to bring this bill to committee as soon as possible so that we can have this bill passed—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Chatham-Kent always brings an expertise and a commitment to the legislation that we're discussing this morning, Bill 55. I would suggest that he is a very strong advocate for consumer protection, and just his remarks would endorse that.

In my case, I would look at it from the point of view of the collection agency business. That, to me, is the part where very vulnerable people who have fallen into difficult times are being preyed on again by unscrupulous bill collectors. There have to be some protections and rules around that, so that the individuals who have fallen into these tough times or circumstances are protected. I'm not sure this bill actually goes far enough, in this respect, in protecting consumers.

There's a lot of language in here, and there are three particular sections: collection agreements, the door-to-door salespeople, and the real estate group. But it's that particular group by itself that I think if the member from Chatham-Kent, in his rebuttal, will address the collection agency business—because if you look at the details, a collection agency is required to enter into an agreement with the debtor. Plain language is what's most important in that. The contract—these people, who are destitute in many cases, are being victimized by having these long,

complex documents, not realizing they're going to pay back 10 times what they owed if they are pressured into these agreements. In that case, I would hope the member from Chatham-Kent discusses that in his two-minute wrap up.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: Encore, ça me fait plaisir de me lever et d'ajouter mes commentaires à ce projet de loi. Je suis extrêmement d'accord avec les commentaires qui sont venus de mon collègue de Chatham-Kent-Essex, où il parle de pommes pourries. On regarde une industrie où—on ne veut vraiment pas la peinturer que tous les vendeurs de produits n'ont pas de conscience et qu'ils cherchent, à des moments, à prendre avantage de personnes en difficulté, mais certainement il y en a, des pommes pourries, parce qu'on regarde les 3 200 plaintes qui sont sorties de cette industrie-ci.

La collègue de Scarborough-Agincourt aussi a mentionné des cauchemars. Oui, parce qu'il y en a plusieurs de ces 3 200 plaintes-là qui sont des cauchemars. Puis c'est vraiment de quoi qu'il faut qu'on regarde parce qu'il y a plusieurs gens qui se prennent—soit c'est une honte, une peur ou une façon d'intégrité. Ils ont peur d'approcher leur famille pour leur expliquer qu'eux autres, à leur tour, se sont fait prendre avantage. Ils se cachent dans leur maison et puis tu n'entends pas parler de ces concerns-là, de ces plaintes-là ou de ces problèmes-là.

Quand on regarde les vendeurs, c'est vraiment décevant, mais ils ne regardent pas surtout à seulement regarder vers les aînés et puis prendre avantage des aînés en les mettant sous pression à leur porte en leur disant : « Il faut que tu prennes ces démarches-ci pour te sauver de l'argent. » Ceci c'est de quoi qui a été présenté de la part de la ville, ou c'est à cause qu'il y a une grosse possibilité qu'il va y avoir une augmentation d'hydro, ou il y a eu des changements de régulation—peu importe si ce sont des aînés.

Ils font aussi cela dans des régions et puis des communautés qui ont été prises par leur économie, où il y a eu des fermetures d'industries. Et puis, les agences de financement que mon ami, mon collègue de Durham, a aussi mentionnées—c'est important qu'on cherche à protéger ces gens-là. Je regarde aux commentaires de fermeture de mon collègue pour vraiment les adresser.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry; two-minute response from the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would like to thank the members from Kenora-Rainy River and from Scarborough-Agincourt, and my colleagues from Durham and also Algoma-Manitoulin, for their comments and response to my 10-minute view.

We take a look at what has been happening, and of course, I think we've all been victimized in one way or

another through high-pressure tactics throughout our years, whether it be hot water heaters, energy companies or even condo sales, where they try to high pressure you because you're down in a beautiful resort, and the next thing you know they're exerting high-pressure tactics to force you to—"You can't leave without it; this is the deal of the century."

Well, we all know that these people use very high-pressure tactics in order to force people to maybe even feel guilty and that they need, in fact, take advantage. Perhaps what we should legislate is to have companies put all of their sales reps through a comprehensive, professionally designed and accredited international sales training program that will ensure honesty and integrity, and of course protect consumers as well.

I look at the farmers down in my area, and I spoke earlier about the industrial wind turbines. Again, I don't want to come right out and say that they're unscrupulous. I'm not suggesting that. However, they do use high-pressure tactics. They are not transparent and, of course, their contracts are steel traps. They've been written by lawyers and it's just page upon page upon page filled with nothing but legalese. They kind of skim through it and say, "Listen, you don't have to worry about this and this. Just sign here and you'll get your \$20,000 a year for 20 years." Of course, people hear and see the money, and that's what they do.

We need to protect even the elderly because they're very trusting people. I believe personally that these salespeople will in fact take advantage. Again, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a privilege to be able to rise this morning and speak on Bill 55, which is titled the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, which is said to offer new protections for door-to-door water heater sales, real estate transactions and debt collection.

While this bill is a step in the right direction, there are other steps that could be taken and other areas such as the door-to-door sale of energy contracts that also require attention.

Previously, I did a two-minute hit where I explained how the sale of door-to-door energy contracts is related to this, and that's basically because schedule 2 is modelled after some of the reforms that this government made in 2010. There is a correlation between the sale of door-to-door energy contracts and water heaters, and many of the companies that offer one service offer the other. The very fact that we tolerate door-to-door sales of these goods makes it extremely difficult to monitor the tactics and the techniques that are used by these companies and basically ensures that abuses will happen.

In fact, when it comes to energy retailers, the Ontario Energy Board has now released a list of the top 10 complaints from consumers, and despite action aimed at curbing these behaviours in 2010, as I mentioned, it's clear that they are still occurring across this province. These issues, like the general contract not conforming to regu-

lation, cancellation charges being too high and unfairly applied; the re-affirmation call, which is something that the act wants to add to the door-to-door sale of water heater contracts, either is not happening or the customer trying to get out of the contract at that time is not having their wishes respected. Despite clear changes that are supposed to curb this behaviour, the misrepresentation of identity—in other words, the salesperson claiming to be with a government agency or a utility—continues to be high on the complaint list, as is the failure of companies to process cancellations.

Another problem that has always existed is that the customer is not receiving a copy of the contract, which has been a considerable problem, particularly in the cases of forgery and fraud on the part of the salesperson, which has been mentioned by a number of speakers, even just this morning. In addition to the Ontario Energy Board continuing to report the failures and these changes—failures to properly verify the contract and the persistent sales tactics often are happening still, and they scare people.

The question is, why do these abuses exist? I believe they exist largely in part because we continue to allow the door-to-door sale of long-term contracts, particularly in the case of energy retailer contracts where the retailer is nothing more than a middleman and the retailer doesn't provide any good or service in return for the huge profits they reap. The only real cost for doing business for these retailers is the cost of commissions that feed the greed of the door-to-door salespeople and the fines that may or may not be levied by the Ontario Energy Board when we can catch somebody in the act of these violations. Again, it's extremely hard to prove that misrepresentation happens when it happens on the doorstep, because it's often a case of, "One person says; another person says."

Why do people turn to these services? In my experience, in a lot of cases it's fear or coercion, but with a lot of people it's also desperation because of the artificially high prices that we're paying for energy in Ontario as a result of government policy. The 2011 report from the Auditor General noted that about 15% of residential customers had signed on with electricity retailers in the hopes of driving their costs down, but, instead, they were paying 35% to 65% more. At the same time, he noted that of 17,000 complaints from the public in the last five years, the overwhelming majority were regarding electricity retailers, leading one to question why, if the government is so concerned with consumer protection, they're not taking meaningful steps and not tackling this problem head-on in banning the sale of door-to-door long-term contracts altogether, to force these operators to appeal to potential customers through more traditional means such as advertising, which can be done with greater government scrutiny. Yet, despite the apparent failure to get the energy retailers under control, the government seems content to transfer many of these failed strategies to the door-to-door sale of water heaters which, at best, is kind of a questionable tactic.

What's worse is that the people who are victims of these circumstances are often those who can least afford it, like people on Ontario Works, WSIB claimants, seniors, those living on a fixed income, those with mental disabilities, students just out of school and others who are struggling to pay their bills. Many of these people are so desperate for relief from their high bills that when someone comes knocking on their door guaranteeing them savings on electricity or natural gas, they're quick to sign on the dotted line. While the government has set regulations on what can be promised, and in fact that savings can't be promised, it continues to allow these sales to be made using methods where the enforcement is really negligible, like on the doorstep.

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That said, it's good to see that the government is trying to do something to protect consumers. If nothing else, this bill is at least a general recognition on the part of the government that it has a role to play in consumer protection, although I believe that the government has a stronger role to play.

But it's not just government; we as MPPs have tremendous power at our fingertips if we choose to use it. If we choose to speak up on an issue, people will listen to us, and many of us are provided with the tools, like weekly columns, members' statements and other activities where we can take part to raise consumer awareness. One of these initiatives that I have taken on personally to raise awareness is with RFID identity theft—that's radio frequency identification—and the steps that consumers can take to protect themselves. I've purchased some sleeves that people can put their bank and credit cards in. And I've let people know that starting next year, they're going to have to be wary of their passports because they're going to have the same technology. So we do have some power as MPPs.

Other things that the government can do: The government can have a boosted role in raising awareness of issues such as scams, phishing schemes, email fraud and other things. That wouldn't be a bad thing. In fact, I would say it would be a big positive. It's something that won't cost a lot. Again, it's just that we need to have the will to do it.

Certainly, this government has been involved in ad campaigns before on things like health care and education, and while some of those may have been employed at questionable times, others haven't been—such as organ donation. I believe that the government could go a lot further with raising these issues. Reaching out to communities and sponsoring awareness sessions and other events could go a long way towards promoting consumer awareness.

Part of the reason why I'm so passionate about this issue is that I've worked with so many people across Kenora—Rainy River over the past number of years who have been scammed, mistreated and even lied to. Before I was elected, I spearheaded dozens of information sessions on energy retailers across my riding. I targeted Ontario Works administrators, and I asked if it would be

possible for me to organize an information session and speak to all of the Ontario Works recipients about their rights, about energy retailers and what to look for, and to show copies of some of the prepaid credit cards and the cheques that they may not realize that by just depositing them into the bank, they're entering into a five-year contract.

I've seen the sense of helplessness and the embarrassment that people feel when they have been misled. Many of them are reluctant to come forward because they feel like it's their fault. They don't realize that these abuses are happening to people across the province, regardless of any mitigating factors. I've personally helped doctors, nurses, teachers and community business leaders just as often as I've helped seniors and people on Ontario Works or WSIB.

The point is, regardless of the steps we take to crack down, regardless of the fines that we levy or the threats that we make, the only way that we're going to ultimately curb these behaviours is through education, making the public aware.

I'll admit the government has some documents out there that are intended to protect consumers, and many of them are helpful. Some of the documents that the Ontario Energy Board has are a prime example of that. But the problem is that nobody wants to believe that they're going to be the ones who are going to be swindled; nobody wants to believe that they will be the ones falling prey to a scam. People are proud, and they don't want to admit weakness. That's why we need a strong consumer advocate. That's why we need to enhance our roles in the community. There's no reason why ServiceOntario or the OPP can't be holding information sessions across the province to make people aware of some of the scams and to bolster some consumer awareness.

Most importantly, we need to crack down on the practices that we know are unethical. I think it's fair to ask why we allow energy retailers to continue to offer contracts when we can virtually guarantee that they can't provide savings.

There are always going to be scams, but why aren't we taking steps to level the playing field? Maybe we need to take drastic steps, by eliminating the cancellation fees of certain services, by allowing cancellations at any time, by increasing the fines and penalties for violators, revoking licences and taking stronger actions. If the steps that we are taking aren't working, we need to be willing to admit it and to take immediate action.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to welcome the family of Fiona Marshall-Young, our page. Kristin Marshall, Paul Young, Anne Marshall, Richard Marshall Sr.,

Madeline Burghardt, Richard Marshall-Burghardt Jr., Raffi Marshall-Burghardt and Tonnán Marshall-Burghardt. Welcome all to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today I'd like to introduce an individual from Peterborough, Jay Amer. Just to remind everybody, Peterborough Day, 228 to 230, between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Be there; it'll be a great event.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to introduce a constituency assistant from my office in Belleville: Ashley Harnden is here today. She's very excited to try some Kawartha Dairy ice cream in the Peterborough reception.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce in the members' west gallery Deanne Vincent and Stephen Kupfer, who are friends of my legislative assistant Adam Bloskie. They're here watching question period today. Welcome.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's my pleasure to introduce two awesome interns from my office: Michelle Johnston and Katrina Sands. I have no doubt they'll be taking this place over at some point in time.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to introduce my guests Cynthia Antony, Maheisha Ravendra and Scott Dallen, sitting in the east gallery. Please join me in welcoming them there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Page Jack Dawson from London West—his mom, Tracy Peifer, and dad, Blake Dawson are here to visit Jack. Thank you for being here—appreciate it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. Last night on TV you apparently apologized for the gas plant scandal. My question is, what did you apologize for? Are you sorry for not listening to the residents of Mississauga and Oakville? Are you sorry for building power plants in residential neighbourhoods? Are you sorry for paying companies not to build power plants? Are you sorry for buying five Liberal seats with \$585 million? Are you sorry for destroying documents and keeping the truth from Ontarians? Or are you just sorry you got caught?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy, come to order. Member for Durham, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would have thought there might have been a bit of a preamble to that question that would have said something like you, "You know, you did the right thing, Premier. We've been asking for an apology, and you apologized." I would've thought that that might have been what he said.

However, that is not what the member opposite said, so I will just say what I said last night, Mr. Speaker. I believe that it was important for me as the Premier in this chair now to say that I apologize, and I'm sorry for the process as it unfolded. I'm sorry that the decision was made in the first place to locate those plants where they were located, and I'm sorry it cost so much to undo that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, Premier, I'll give you a little history. The Liberals failed to win a majority which would have covered your tracks; there would have been no scandal hearings. When we tried to get to the truth—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy, come to order. Next time you have to be quicker.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —the Liberals prorogued this House then redacted, deleted and destroyed documents that would have gotten us to that truth. Now your political advisers have all told you that every one of those delay strategies have failed, so the next move is to concoct a political apology. You're sorry you got caught.

Premier, Ontarians want more than a hollow apology; they want a refund. Will you order the Liberal Party to pay the money back?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order. Minister of Community and Social Services, come to order. Member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe that my primary political relationship is with the people of Ontario, and I was speaking to the people of Ontario yesterday. Since I have been in this role, I have been as open and as transparent as I could possibly be. I answered questions at committee. I made sure that we opened up the process so that all the questions could be asked, so that all the documents that were asked for could be provided. That has happened. We have heard many perspectives at committee. I believe that it was important for me to take personal responsibility, and I have done that.

I really believe the committee can continue to ask questions and continue to do its due diligence. But I have taken responsibility now to put in place a process that will ensure that this will not happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, it would have been a lot better for Ontarians if you did something about this scandal back in 2011, when you first saw the documents

in cabinet. You knew this was a bad deal back then, and you—you—could have stopped this from ever happening.

But your late apology comes with consequences. If you're really sincere, you would arrange for the Liberal Party to pay back the money. If you're really sorry, you would order your Liberal witnesses to return to committee and tell the truth this time, and you would stand here and answer the pivotal question in this scandal: When did you know the costs were more than you publicly stated? If you are not prepared to, Premier, then call our confidence motion and let this House decide if your apology was sincere.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, I'm glad the member opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Cambridge will come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the member mentioned confidence, because it is important now, I believe, that we have this discussion about the budget. The budget is the confidence issue that is before this House that will have a direct impact on the lives of people in Ontario.

I have visited a couple of manufacturing companies in the last couple of days, and they are very happy with the measures that we have in the budget that will support their purchase of new equipment and new technology, and will support young people getting the skills training they need in order to be able to work in their businesses. That's the kind of measure that needs to be in place. That's why we need the budget to pass. I look forward to a debate on the budget and getting the budget passed.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is, as well, for the Premier. For a number of months in this House and in the committee room, we asked you to apologize to the people of Ontario. Only last night, when you decided to seek absolution from a taxpayer-funded journalist, did you offer that.

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Did your apology for the Liberal seat-saving plan that cost Ontario families hundreds of millions of dollars for thwarting democracy include saying sorry for co-chairing the Liberal campaign team that made the crass political decision to cost taxpayer dollars? Did it include you signing a memorandum to cabinet that you either did not understand or chose to withhold from the public? Are you sorry for not telling Ontarians that you knew the true costs were higher than \$40 million? Are you sorry that you are hiding from calling the PC confidence motion? Or was your Steve Paikin climbdown a PR stunt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've answered a lot of the issues that the member opposite raised. I went to committee; I answered all the questions that were asked of me.

Again, the member opposite—her voice is one of the voices that have been calling for a taking of personal responsibility, and I did that last night, Mr. Speaker. I made it clear that I take personal responsibility; that I'm sorry about the mistakes that our government made. We have said that there were mistakes made. We have said that the process was not what it should have been, and that those gas plants should not have been located where they were in the first place. We need a process going forward that will make sure that doesn't happen again. That is what I apologized for last night.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This has been an interesting PR exercise. But Speaker, you are well aware that my colleagues and I have asked 130 times what this Premier knew, when she knew it, when that cost ballooned well past \$40 million, and she has refused over 130 times to offer that.

So excuse us, on this side of the House, for expecting your staged apology last night with a taxpayer-funded journalist to be nothing more than a PR stunt.

Speaker, we on this side of the House suspect that that Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think I touched a nerve, Speaker.

I suspect she refuses to acknowledge what she knew and when she knew it because she will be held in contempt of Parliament if she—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Isn't it true, Premier, that you're only sorry right now so you can take attention away from this scandal?

Premier, if you were truly sorry for scamming Ontarians out of hundreds of millions of dollars—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. Be seated, please.

While the clock is stopped, I would remind this member and all members that when I stand, you sit. If you don't look at me, that's not my responsibility.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to make a commentary on the political environment that we operate in. I understand why the member opposite would talk about PR, but I honestly believe that the frame that she is putting around what I said last night actually says more about her than it does about me.

I'm a human being doing this job, and I have to do this job in the best way that I can. I have done everything I could to open up this process. I continue to get calls from

people of Ontario who said, "You know, we want to see that personal responsibility taken." That's what I did last night. It had nothing to do with public relations; it had nothing to do with a political stunt. It had to do with me taking personal responsibility, and whether the members opposite believe that or not is really immaterial, Mr. Speaker. I did what I knew I needed to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Of course she knew what she needed to do. She needed to say she was sorry to the public because her PR stunt is the only thing that's going to move her past this and divert attention from the matter at hand, which is, she has come to this House repeatedly and said that this cost \$40 million when she knew for a very long period of time it wasn't. She came to committee and evaded 11 questions from me at that moment and another 29 from my colleague from Nipissing.

I will say this, Speaker: This is a Premier who has spent hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money in order to save Liberal MPPs' seats. She decided to go to a taxpayer-funded journalist last night with a script to stage a PR campaign so she could distract the public from telling the truth. If her saying "sorry" really means that what she did was wrong, she would know that she needs to call the Ontario PC contempt motion to the floor of this House—not only for debate, but for a vote—and further, that she should bring a judicial inquiry—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I think we should come to the defense of Steve Paikin, over here, and of TVOntario. I think TVOntario is a terrific institution.

But quite apart from that, let me talk about the confidence motion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just talk about the confidence motion that is before us, because clearly the members opposite want to have the opportunity to vote on a confidence motion. The budget is the confidence motion that I believe is extremely relevant to the lives of people in Ontario. There are measures in the budget that will create jobs in this province and that will deal with issues that will affect people in their day-to-day lives. I look forward to that debate. I look forward to seeing that budget passed, because I believe that we need to get on with the business of, just what I said, creating jobs and making changes that will affect people's day-to-day lives. That's what our confidence motion is about.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, we'll be sitting down this afternoon, and I've been clear with the public that this is a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, I'm waiting for two parties to tone it down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not asking for extra comments.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker. Gee, that was an unexpected bit of excitement there for a minute.

Nonetheless, I've been clear with the public that it's going to be an open and transparent process that we engage in, so I'm going to ask this question in public: Is the Premier ready to move forward with measures that are going to make this government more transparent and more accountable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We will have a good conversation this afternoon. Terms of endearment take different forms.

I look forward to sitting down with the leader of the third party and having a conversation about the suggestions that she has made. I will just say that I'm not going to comment on the specifics, because that's why, I think, we need to have a face-to-face meeting, but I believe that finding ways for government to be more accountable and making sure that we do everything we can to be accountable—that, absolutely, is what I would like to talk with the leader of the third party about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm pleased to hear that, because Ontarians are the people who actually want to be hopeful in this process. They want to see real change that makes the government more transparent and more accountable to them. After all, the government is here for them, not the other way around.

Yesterday, the Premier finally apologized for the gas plant scandal, but it is a day late and a buck short. The money has already been wasted, and the scandal has already happened. Now we need to make sure that it never happens again. I hope we all agree in this chamber that Ontarians deserve better.

Will the Premier agree that her government needs to be more accountable and transparent, and that New Democrats are proposing effective ways of doing just that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I look forward to that meeting that we're going to have this afternoon, and I think that accountability is an evolving reality. We have, in fact, as a government, put in a number of accountability measures that I think were necessary. In 2010, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act put new rules and higher standards in place in terms of lobbyists. We put those rules in place. When we were newly elected in 2004, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act put in place a framework for the conduct of fiscal policy.

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We have put those measures in place, but there is always more that a government can do to explore where

accountability gaps exist. I know that that will be part of our conversation this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families want to have confidence in the future. They don't want to be waiting for the next scandal and then waiting for the next apology. A financial accountability office will give families assurance that their money won't be wasted. Ontarians want to see transparency and accountability. Will the Premier agree that creating a financial accountability office is actually the right thing to do?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the leader of the third party: Let's talk about that this afternoon. Let's talk about what some of the specifics of her suggestions are so that I can understand better where she's coming from and whether the suggestions are prudent and whether they can actually be implemented.

We need to have that face-to-face meeting. I'm glad we're finally able to have it, Mr. Speaker, because I do believe people want to see government working. They want to see the parties in this Legislature working together. I have heard that over and over again: that people want to see us realize and understand that we're in a minority Parliament and that it is our responsibility to work together. I appreciate the willingness of the leader of the third party to now sit down and have this conversation.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Ontarians have told us over the last week or so that they wanted to see fairness, balance and transparency. They want to have faith in a health care system, making sure it will be there for them when they need it and for their loved ones as well. But they've seen a system instead that's rocked by scandals and waste and haven't had anyone to turn to in that process. They want to know that someone will always be in their corner, someone who's independent and who will stick up for them—someone exactly like the Ombudsman. Will the Premier make the health care system more accountable and allow the Ombudsman to have oversight in our health care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having that conversation this afternoon with the leader of the third party, because it's one of the suggestions she has made. But I would just say that there are a number of accountability mechanisms that already exist within government, and one of the things I'd like to talk with the leader of the third party about is how we might be able to tighten up or improve accountability mechanisms that already exist, because they're there and I think we need to come to some kind of agreement on whether they can be improved or not. That's one of the things I would like to put on the table as we have our conversation this afternoon because I do believe, as I said earlier, that there is always room for improvement.

Let's look at what's already there, let's see if those things can be improved because I, like the leader of the third party, believe that accountability is an expectation of the people of Ontario, and we need to do everything we can to be accountable for our actions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have three things to say to the Premier's comment about the accountability of the Liberal government thus far in Ontario: eHealth, Ornge and the gas plants scandal. People are tired of that. Ontarians told us for the last week and a bit that they are tired of not being able to trust that their government is going to use their money wisely and prudently and for their needs instead of the government's needs or the Liberal Party's needs.

They told us they want to see some fairness in this budget as well. They see a government handing a brand new \$1.3-billion tax loophole to corporations while Ontarians are told that they're going have to have to belly up \$300 million on a bill to start tolling our carpool lanes. Does the Premier think that's a fair solution to fund transit and transportation infrastructure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, the Minister of Finance is in communication with the federal Minister of Finance on the issue around the corporate tax regime. We understand that that's something we need to work on. But we have to work on it with the federal government.

That's one of the things that I want to talk to the leader of the third party about. What is doable? What exactly is doable in terms of the provincial government's jurisdiction and the possibilities that we have to make changes? Because I can't make a commitment, Mr. Speaker, either in public or in private, to do something that we don't have jurisdiction over. What we commit to has to be doable and prudent, which is why, in our budget, we have tackled some of the issues she raised in terms of auto insurance and home care accountability. We have tackled those things in a way that's prudent and that we can actually deliver on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I hope there are some negotiations happening with the federal government because it wasn't in the budget to get rid of that \$1.3-billion upcoming corporate tax loophole. There was a last-minute letter sent by the finance minister to the federal finance minister. That's not good enough for Ontarians; it doesn't show a real commitment.

New Democrats asked Ontarians what they thought of the budget. What they told us is that it can stand to be improved, particularly on accountability measures. They're tired of broken promises. They're tired of wasted money.

Is the Premier going to listen to Ontarians and add much-needed accountability and transparency to this budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I look forward to our conversation this afternoon.

I have been listening to the people of Ontario and will continue to do that because I really believe that that is

how good policy gets made. I think it's very important that politicians—all of us—listen to the people in our ridings and listen to the people across the province about their concerns.

That's what our budget reflects. There has been a lot of talk about where the ideas for the budget came from. They came from the concerns of the people of the province. Those concerns are about jobs, making sure that people's children have jobs and that people themselves can find their way into the economy. Those concerns are about their everyday lives, making sure that the issues that affect them on a day-to-day basis, like the provision of health care for their parents and grandparents—for our parents and grandparents—making sure that people get the home care, the health care that they need in a timely way. Those are the things people talk to us about. There was common ground with the third party, and there was common ground, I believe, with the official opposition. That's why I hope we can get this budget passed and we can start to implement those measures.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Premier. The gas plant fiasco is the biggest scandal in Ontario's history. You've tried the denial game. You've tried the cover-up game. You've tried the blame game, and now you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Put your question, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: You've tried the blame game, you've tried the cover-up game, you've tried the apology game; I'm asking you to show some integrity and do the honourable thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. There was a word used there that is unparliamentary, and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw that single word.

I'm asking you to do the honourable thing. Look straight in the camera, Premier, and tell the people of Ontario either yes, the scandal deserves a vote, for you to hold a confidence vote in this House, or no, "I refuse to let the people of Ontario hold the Liberal government accountable."

Premier, please tell the people of Ontario—it's a very simple question—yes or no.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I want to assure the member, and indeed all members of this House—I can guarantee it—in the next several weeks, there will be a confidence motion in this House. We will be bringing forward the budget motion, which is a matter of confidence, and members will have a chance to both debate and vote on it.

But, Mr. Speaker, to the first part of the honourable member's question, I go back to some of the comments I made yesterday. Could he explain to us why—when the Liberal Party decided in the last election to promise the cancellation of the gas plants, according to them it was

the worst thing to have ever befallen western civilization, but when the Leader of the Opposition made the exact same promise, it was somehow okay. Why, when the Leader of the Opposition appeared in front of committee yesterday, would he not even deign to explain the difference between the two positions?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Back to the Premier: In your speech from the throne, you talked about "Your government, and your cabinet ministers, will be accountable to all the people of Ontario..." It boggles my mind that any member of this House could prop up this scandal-plagued government in good conscience.

Premier, once again, I ask you, will you call on this assembly to debate our want of confidence motion so that, once and for all, we can deal with this issue and truly restore accountability in Ontario? Will do you that, Premier?

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Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, he wants to talk about accountability. Let's review that facts: When the new Premier came into office, one of her first actions was to ask the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation. The second thing she did was, she proposed a special committee of the Legislature to look into it. That party said no because they wanted to have a witch hunt over a former member of the Legislature. She produced 56,000 pages of documents and offered to have a wide search throughout government for more documents, and that party and the NDP voted against it. She appeared in front of committee when asked and answered all the questions. We saw the Leader of the Opposition had to practically be dragged there, invited over and over again and refused to answer any questions—28 times. We asked him simple questions and he would not come forward with any answers.

When it comes to transparency, this side of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. The government is refusing to share basic information with Ontarians about its scheme to toll highways. The Minister of Finance says tolls will generate \$250 million to \$300 million while Metrolinx says it will generate \$25 million, and the Minister of Transportation won't tell us anything. No one in government will say how much it will cost to build the lanes, where the lanes will be, what the toll will cost or whether this expensive scheme will actually break even. Why won't your government be open about the basic elements of this risky and costly tolling scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I really do believe my friend is asking questions with the best of intentions, but I

would like to direct him to the Metrolinx website; on that website, you can actually see the entire costs. Metrolinx has carefully planned out which routes are optimal. Metrolinx can actually tell you that the price per kilometre is 47 cents. You could also read today's Toronto Star, which points out the very successful HOT lanes across North America are used mostly by people with under \$60,000 income, that it's been a benefit to middle-income families, especially moms who are trying to get their kids to school. It's a very cost-effective option, and it's had a significant impact on reducing congestion.

This is hardly something used by only affluent people, and it has not compromised the role of HOV lanes one iota, and those are the facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The experience of tolling high-occupancy lanes in other places is that the cost of construction and enforcement is high while the revenues generated are low. In many areas, these lanes have lost money or have struggled to break even—I think the minister knows that. Just last month, we learned that the new HOT lanes in Los Angeles had actually increased overall congestion. I also think the minister knows that as well.

Why is the government committing to an expensive and risky scheme that is not a serious revenue tool for transit without providing any reason at all to think that it will work?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we have, right now, well into construction the biggest transportation/transit build-out in the history of Ontario. Soon, the boring machines on Eglinton will be pulled out and people all across north and central Toronto will be able to whisk across the city efficiently in some of the most beautiful LRTs and subways ever.

In Durham region, just the other day, Mr. Anderson and I launched the Durham BRT system from Oshawa to the Scarborough campus of U of T. For now, people all across the eastern GTA and Ajax and Pickering can now get their kids to school. We have two-way, all-day GO service every half-hour on the Lakeshore line, ending the bedroom communities and ending the suburbs being a—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I hope he can get excited—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BREAST CANCER

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Regular mammograms are the best way to detect breast cancer. Yesterday, I heard in the news that a study by Cancer Care Ontario researchers found that one type of digital mammography, called digital computed radiography, is less effective than other types of mammograms.

As a woman, I'm concerned about these findings. Women across Ontario should be able to rely on the most

effective technology to detect breast cancer. Could the minister tell us how the situation is being addressed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the member from York South—Weston for this question. Breast cancer is a disease that affects too many of us, too many of our mothers, our sisters, our daughters and our friends. Those women deserve nothing but the best possible care.

The decisions we make in health care are guided by the best available evidence. Scientific evidence is always emerging that guides our decisions about what we need to do to improve our medical practices.

There is new evidence, recommendations by cancer experts, so we are updating the technology we use for breast cancer screening. We're investing \$25 million to replace computed radiography devices with direct radiography devices across the province. This will ensure that women will continue to get the most effective screening for breast cancer using the best technology available.

I want to say thank you to the researcher, Dr. Anna Chiarelli at Cancer Care Ontario, who conducted this groundbreaking study. It will help us provide better care for women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: This issue needs to be taken seriously and addressed with strong action, as the minister is doing. Breast cancer is a deadly disease, and early detection is key. If a woman learns she has breast cancer, she needs to be reassured that the health care system will be there with her in her fight against cancer every step of the way.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Can women across Ontario who suffer from breast cancer be sure that they will get the best-quality care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I share the member's commitment to ensuring that women with breast cancer are given the support they need to beat this disease. Ontario is a leader in cancer care; 88% of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer in Ontario are alive and well five years later, and an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world, according to the Cancer System Quality Index.

This is a result of our government's commitment to cancer care. We have tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs under the new drug funding program. We are funding 49 additional drugs for 74 indications. We have cut wait times for cancer surgery, and last year, 97% of Ontario's cancer patients started radiation within the four-week national target.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. This afternoon, the House will debate and vote upon our opposition day motion, which, if passed, and if the government respects the will of the House, would require the government House leader to call our non-confidence motion for debate and a vote on May 28.

An affirmative vote by the House today should compel the government to abide by hundreds of years of parlia-

mentary tradition and explicitly and directly test the confidence that this House has in the government.

If our motion passes this afternoon, can the Premier commit to respecting the will of this House?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I have a couple of points. The first is, I want to confirm to the member, as I did to his colleague, that this Legislature will be dealing with a confidence motion in the next several weeks when we deal with the budget motion, and, God willing, we'll also be dealing with the budget bill at various stages, and that too will be a confidence motion. So he should not be worried; there will be plenty of confidence motions.

In terms of the process that we have here in the Legislature, I thought the member should be very, very aware that section 44 of the standing orders outlines the process by which the motion that he is referring to can be brought forward. That's not based on hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition; that's actually a change to the standing orders that was brought in by the Progressive Conservatives when they were in power.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Back to the Premier: The government cannot evade responsibility on this. Either they respect the will of the House or they don't. There can be no weasel words; there is no middle ground. This is the Parliament of Ontario.

1110

Thirteen days have passed since the budget speech and we're still waiting for the NDP to make up their minds. They may very well sit on their hands again and allow the budget to pass, as they did last year, but a budget motion is a confidence motion only as it pertains to the budgetary policy of the government, not confidence in an overall, comprehensive sense. If our motion passes today the government cannot ignore the will of the House and still claim legitimacy to govern if the confidence question is still outstanding. Will the Premier do the right thing if our motion passes this afternoon and call our non-confidence motion for debate and a vote on May 28?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm kind of enjoying this debate over parliamentary procedure here. The simple fact of the matter is that a government that can't pass its budget cannot govern, so therefore it is naturally a confidence motion. Again, I assure the member that we will have a vote on that motion within the prescribed period that's outlined in the standing orders. As I say, if everything goes the right way, we hope to have sub-sequent votes on the legislation that accompanies it.

In terms of the want of confidence issue that he has put forward, again, I encourage the member to look at section 44 of the standing orders, which outlines the process by which it could be brought forward to the Legislature. As I say, they are not our rules; they are rules that

were brought forward by the Progressive Conservatives when they were in power.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. It is absolutely clear that this government's OLG privatization plan is in chaos. Ontarians want to know, is Toronto getting a special deal to host a downtown casino or isn't it? This government doesn't seem to know. Ontarians want to know, are OLG casinos going to be turned over to global gambling operators? This government doesn't seem to know. Will this government admit that its OLG privatization strategy is a total mess and scrap this misguided plan once and for all?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite has reaffirmed the need to transform the way we do business with the OLG, recognizing the tremendous amount of contributions it brings to produce and initiate more schools and hospitals, and to enable us to afford social programs. We need to ensure that the operation of the OLG is managed in an appropriate fashion to maximize the value to the taxpayers. That's exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This time to the minister, I guess: The OLG and the government's own hand-picked CEO invited global gambling operators to bid on a downtown Toronto casino and floated the idea of a sweetheart deal on the hosting formula to city council to cement that deal. These companies in turn made it clear that if they weren't going to get a downtown site and own the operation, they weren't coming to Ontario. The question: With a crucial vote coming up at Toronto city council next week, will the government finally come clean on its plans for a downtown Toronto casino and let the people and the council know in advance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The council have before them an opportunity to make a decision; and it's up to the council, it's up to the municipality to make that decision. The province has made it clear that we won't provide any special deals to any specific municipality. We're going to be equal, we're going to be fair; it's going to be the same formula across the province. The council has before them an option and a determination if they want a proponent to bring in billions of dollars in new construction to the city of Toronto; that will be up to them. In terms of the formula, it will be determined, it will be the same, it will be equal for the entire province.

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is to the Attorney General. As we all know, in this age of technology electronic tools create efficiencies and contribute to economic growth. Over the past few years, Peel realtors and the directors of the Mississauga and Brampton real estate boards requested that the government use elec-

tronic tools for their business transactions. As part of the 2013 budget, our government has proposed an amendment to the Electronic Commerce Act, extending the act to land transactions.

Mr. Speaker, could the AG elaborate on the proposed amendment and how it would benefit Ontario businesses?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I want to thank the hard-working member from Mississauga-Brampton South for the question. She has really been a hard-working member here.

Speaker, I can tell you that the government supports the use of electronic communications as broadly as possible, for reasons of both efficiency and economy. That's why we've introduced the legislation as part of the 2013 budget bill. I know the member from Prince Edward-Hastings is interested in it as well, and he will vote for the budget bill; I'm absolutely convinced.

We want to extend that in the Electronic Commerce Act to land transactions as well. We believe that these land transactions would, if the legislation is passed, benefit from the standards and rules for electronic communications that have worked so well over the last dozen years or so in so many other areas. It will benefit businesses as well as consumers in Ontario and, in particular, those involved in the real estate industry. That's because we know that the real estate industry in Ontario has been requesting this change for some time. It's time to do it by passing the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I thank the Attorney General for elaborating on the proposed amendment. It's good news, not only for Ontario realtors but also for the consumers. This amendment will allow use of electronic tools to conduct business efficiently and conveniently.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Attorney General: Are there any other ways in which this government is helping our real estate sector in the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know the Minister of Consumer Services looks forward to answering this part of the question.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to inform the member that we do, in fact, have legislation in front of the House right now that aims to do just what she's asking. Just like the budget we've tabled, there is another bill, called Bill 55, to help people in their everyday lives. It's called the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. Bill 55 proposes to make changes to the real estate sector to promote a more fair and transparent marketplace.

Under this proposed bill, we will make it easier for buyers and professionals to verify that the actual number of written offers were made in a competitive real estate bidding process, as well as allow real estate professionals greater options and flexibility in delivering the services they offer.

Bill 55 and the amendments proposed in the budget relating to electronic signatures that the Attorney General referred to are the type of legislation that helps Ontarians.

I strongly encourage all members of the Legislature to support both—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. In just a few days, Ontarians will get together with friends and family and fire up the barbecue and open the cottage on the Victoria Day long weekend. As well, many tourists will be travelling to Ontario to visit over 1,500 special events across the province and enjoy the best that this province has to offer. This includes Ontario's wonderful wine, beer and spirits.

However, a dark cloud looms, threatening to put a damper on all this: an impending LCBO strike. The union has engaged in an aggressive ad campaign demanding more for their workers.

Premier, with LCBO stores all carrying Ontario beer, wine and spirits, how in good conscience can this government let an impending strike occur, imperiling Ontario's tourism and beverage industry on one of Ontario's favourite holidays? How can you do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have a situation where the LCBO and the employees are negotiating a collective agreement, and it's appropriate and prudent for them to initiate and have those discussions. We'll allow them to proceed. I'm hopeful that, in the end, they'll come to an agreement and that we're all going to be able to enjoy a great long weekend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Given your and your government's record of buying public sector union support with massive wage increases and perks at the expense of Ontario's fiscal future, is it no wonder we are yet again held hostage at the eleventh hour by a union demanding more? This is something you brought upon yourself, Premier.

Public sector compensation is out of control, and Ontario's broken arbitration system is putting Ontario taxpayers at further risk. While your government's budgets have earned us nothing but credit downgrades, our PC plan for sustainable public sector compensation is clearly the only way forward.

Will the Premier side with Ontarians for their Victoria Day weekend and their future by preventing a strike and freezing public sector compensation by legislation for a two-year period?

1120

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the question. I think the member opposite very well knows how our labour relations system works in this province. It is the responsibility of the employer and the trade union to be able to come together to negotiate a settlement agreement.

We also know that the best agreements are the ones which are negotiated, that are bargained around the table, and we encourage both parties—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is not helpful—both sides, including the third party.

Answer, please?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we encourage both parties to continue to work hard. I know they are negotiating. The government is focused on assisting the parties in reaching a settlement. I am very happy to report that our highly skilled mediators from the Ministry of Labour have met the parties on 19 different occasions to help them come to a settlement, and I am hopeful and confident that a settlement will be reached between the LCBO and the union.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: Northwestern Ontario is struggling economically. For years, we have been looking to this government to support job growth and economic development. One project that could have a major impact, resulting in the investment of \$700 million and 500 permanent, full-time jobs, is the Rainy River Gold Project. But far from supporting this investment, this government is needlessly delaying it by being almost two months late with approving the terms of reference.

Why is this government not doing everything in its power to promote job growth in northwestern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the great record that we have in terms of the northern Ontario growth plan, let alone the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, where we have provided, over the last 10 years, \$824 million in investments toward creating or retaining 22,000 jobs in northern Ontario.

I can tell you, we're obviously very excited about the opportunities returning to the forestry sector, as we see a transforming of that sector.

We're looking to the opportunities in the mining sector—not just simply the Ring of Fire, as exciting as that is, but also the other developments—and working closely with all industry to make that happen.

Certainly, this continues to be a priority for us. Last week, we were pleased to be at FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, to speak about how keen we are to continue to move forward with our economic vision for northern Ontario.

I look forward to your supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Back to the Premier: This is about the Rainy River Gold Project. This company has done everything right. It has engaged with First Nations and communities from the start. This delay in approving the terms of reference is in part ministry incompetence and partly the result of this Liberal government's cuts to the Ministry of the Environment, a ministry whose

budget has fallen by 45% in real terms since the 1990s and, according to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, that lacks the basic resources to do its job.

If this government is serious about job growth and job creation, it needs to ensure that the government resources are in place to foster that growth. This is not happening.

This company needs its terms of reference approved by May 17. When will the minister finally sign off so that these badly needed and wanted jobs can move ahead?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speaker, the member may wish to consult with her environmental critic, the member for Davenport, and perhaps with the member for Toronto–Danforth on the importance of giving a full assessment of all of the environmental implications of any of these developments. I know the member is eager to see it moving forward, but her party surely would want to make sure that all of the environmental considerations have been given.

I have given this, personally, very high attention as well, and I am one who is always optimistic, I must say.

I do think that it's important for the New Democratic Party to, as it once was, be very concerned about the environmental implications of any development that happens to take place anywhere in this province.

We will have that opportunity to give a full evaluation of it in appropriate time. I am sure that the necessary approvals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Timmins–James Bay, come to order. Thank you.

New question.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew knows what I'm going to say.

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Premier in her capacity as the Minister of Agriculture and Food. The agri-food industry is one of the largest industries in Ontario. Not only does it employ over 700,000 people but it provides \$34 billion to our GDP. The agri-food industry is composed, in large part, of farmers, the men and women who till the fields, plant the crops and feed Ontarians. Another component important to the agri-food industry, and that should be recognized on this, is the food processing sector. The success of the productivity of food processing is vital. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what our recent budget will do to increase productivity in the food processing industry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member from Ajax–Pickering for the question. He accurately portrays, Mr. Speaker, the importance of the food processing industry to Ontario. I think it's not well understood generally that this is a \$34-billion industry, the agri-food industry. It's a major economic driver creating jobs, improving the economy and supporting our producers.

We believe it's important to support and to contribute to our food processing industry, which is why in the 2013 budget, which we would love to see passed, we included the proposal to extend the capital cost allowance for manufacturing and for processing machinery and equipment. This will have a direct impact on the food processing industry. This measure will reduce the Ontario tax on manufacturing and processing equipment by \$265 million over the course of the next two fiscal years, and that will support our effort to increase productivity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Premier. The men and women who work in the food processing sector will be happy to hear that this continues to support everyone in the agri-food industry. In my riding of Ajax-Pickering there will be a number of food processors that can benefit from the extension of the capital cost allowance.

These same food processors have addressed a concern for red tape. While ensuring that food safety and quality is maintained, duplication in the process can stand in the way of the success of these Ontario companies. Can the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, please update the House on what our government is intending to do to reduce red tape that exists in this industry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have heard this concern from producers and processors when it comes to unnecessary red tape or regulation; that's exactly why the Open for Business round table was created. The round table asks for input from producers and processors on how we can work together to find more ways to clear the path for business success.

The round table actually met last week to discuss the priorities of the sector; both processors and producers were at the table. There were a number of other ministries; it is important for other ministries to hear the concerns of the agri-food business. It was a productive conversation; I was very pleased to be part of that conversation.

It's important that we continue to work together, because that's where the solutions are found. When we check in with each other, we find out what's actually happening on the ground so that we can foster the innovation and productivity that's needed in the sector.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, I want to tell you about a young girl in my riding named Hope Hawkins who is hearing-impaired. Hope will be entering grade 8 next year, which is the crucial year of development as one transitions into high school. Unfortunately, she'll be the only grade 8 student in her class at Robarts School for the Deaf in London, due to a declining enrolment. Hope has recently been accepted to the Ernest Drury School for the Deaf in Milton. She wants to attend the school for grade 8 before entering high school, but she has been denied transportation services because she lives three minutes outside the ministry's 70-minute threshold.

It's already been agreed that Hope will receive transportation when she starts grade 9. A public school is not a good option for Hope; EAs and support workers must be hired, special equipment must be provided and it's an environment full of stigma. Hope has attempted this route three times before and the educational experience she received has not been ideal.

Minister, could you direct the provincial superintendent to approve Hope's request to receive the transportation services in the upcoming year?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much. Obviously, I'm not familiar with this particular issue. It always is difficult when a student needs to be transported to one of the provincial schools, and trying to make those arrangements.

I think that perhaps in this instance, it would be best if we could get some more information about the particular case, and then we'll endeavour to see if we can find a resolution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1130

Mr. Jeff Yurek: [*Inaudible*] receive more information. She's hit so many roadblocks just trying to get to a school where she can be with her peers.

Minister, I meet with many constituents who deal with the black-and-white nature of some of this government's rules and regulations. We need to understand the need for rules and guidelines, but the inflexibility in a situation like this bespeaks to a failure of the delivery of essential services. This situation takes nothing more than a little common sense, and I hope to get it resolved. I hope that we cannot be beholden to the bureaucratic rules, and do the right thing in this situation. Can you let me know soon whether Hope will receive the transportation services to attend school next year?

Hon. Liz Sandals: If we could get the information fairly quickly and get some contact information for the individual student—because we obviously will need to talk to the individual families involved to get the accurate information—then I will certainly be very happy to have my ministry look at the situation very quickly.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It would seem that it's almost a regular occurrence now that we have to ask you questions or we have to have meetings with you to talk about the failure of the privatized system of maintaining our highways across Ontario.

Last week it was the city of Timmins and area that lost access to highways because of a snowfall that is quite normal for the month of May—no snow plows to be dispatched.

Now we had a three-day closure of Highway 101 as a result of MTO not doing what it has to do to inform the contractor on what they have to do to be able to open up a ditch. As a result, Highway 101 by the town of Wawa was closed down for a number of days. When will you

admit the system doesn't work and do something about fixing it before we get in really serious trouble in northern Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member is quite right. We do meet regularly. I meet with members of the opposition who have concerns, as well as members on this side of the House. As I said to a question the other day, it was very evident in the discussions I had with northern mayors that we had hail, rain, and snow in sequences that were quite serious. I have shared with some of his colleagues the snow and ice reports that have come out and the weather updates. We've been very transparent about that. This was one of the most difficult winters we've had, and I look forward to continuing to work with the member opposite.

We are looking at—and he knows, because some of his members have been involved in those discussions—modifications that we can make to snow removal in the north that obviously couldn't happen in the middle of the last contract season. But I appreciate—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—his comments and the issues he has raised, and I'm hoping that we—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the only thing that's changed is the way you maintain these highways. Northern Ontario and the rest of this province have been under this type of weather for years. It's not as if it doesn't snow in the month of May in northern Ontario. It's not as if ditches don't freeze and the ministry doesn't have to thaw them and make sure that the water runs in order to not shut down highways. The issue is that MTO has lost the capacity to respond to what the conditions on our highways are and to keep them open.

So I'm asking you a very simple question: Will you commit to actually reviewing this system so that we don't end up in this situation every time it rains or snows somewhere in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are now in the period between April 22 and May 22—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just say you're sorry, or go on Steve Paikin and say you're sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, last time.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: For many years now we reduce the snow equipment—this has been going on for decades—by 50%. The issue was raised by the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, and I said I would get back to him, so I can address that today as well. That was the reason, because we're in the transition period right now, so contractors phase out about 50% of their equipment. We've had exceptional late-winter snows that have caused that.

I do want to renew my commitment to the members opposite that we said—and you and I have met several times now, and I've met with other members—that we will review that and put changes in place for next winter, that I've accepted the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Education. Today, we're joined by eight-year-old Elizabeth Yamoah and her dad, Peter. She's eight years old and attends Sunningdale school in Oakville.

Last week, our government introduced a budget that, if passed, is going to help create jobs and build a prosperous and fair Ontario for all. One of the ways we'll do this is by continuing to invest in our world-class education system. We've made tremendous gains in that education system with test scores and graduation rates that continue to rise, but we know that better student achievement will give all young people like Elizabeth the tools they need to succeed in the future labour market.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please tell this House and the students at Sunningdale school how the proposed budget is going to help improve student achievement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member from Oakville and welcome his constituent Elizabeth, wherever she is, to school here. Hi, Elizabeth.

I'd like Elizabeth and all the students at Sunningdale school to know that our government is committed to enhancing student achievement, closing the student achievement gap and supporting those students who may be struggling.

We know that learning experiences for children in the summer can help students further develop important literacy and numeracy skills.

Mr. Speaker, as you will know from your experience as a principal, what often happens—particularly with students who are struggling—is that they actually go backward over the summer. That's why we have introduced specific literacy and numeracy summer camps, summer learning programs.

So if the budget is passed, we will nearly double the funding for the summer programming, up to \$3 million, and in addition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order, Speaker?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I remind the Minister, when I stand, you sit.

Point of order from the member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Earlier in question period, the Minister of the Attorney General in response to a question that was in violation—in my opinion—of standing order 23(i) and (j), he actually stated that he knew how I was going to be voting on the Ontario budget. I'm not exactly sure how the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

VISITOR

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka on a point of order.

Mr. Norm Miller: I wanted to introduce the mayor of Kapuskasing and president of FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, who's in the visitors' east gallery here today watching question period, Al Spacek.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I didn't notice my good friend up there so I'm glad that somebody picked it up, and I apologize for not having seen you up there, Al. We'll see you later.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Al, we're glad you're here.

DEFERRED VOTES

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les
aliments locaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members take their seats, please. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Honwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jackson, Rod
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanhof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim

Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy

McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 93; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will recognize the point of order. If the Sergeant-at-Arms had stood up, I would have said no.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Sorry about that. I just wanted to ask the House to join me in congratulating Premier Christy Clark, who won an outstanding election last night.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Paul Miller: We have some special guests in the west gallery today. From ACTRA, we have Tabby Johnson, Theresa Tova, David Sparrow, Lisa Blanchette and Hugh O'Reilly; and from Equity, we have Lynn McQueen and Jeremy Civiero.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAC McKENNA

Mrs. Jane McKenna: You learn the most about yourself when you have children. As a mother of five, I can attest to that, and I'm thankful for each moment, good or bad, with my children.

I'm especially mindful of that this week, because tomorrow my youngest child and only son is graduating from Burlington Central High School. I feel a special pride in Mac's achievements this year, his dedication to schoolwork—despite every cell in his body screaming out to go skateboarding with his friends or playing his

drums for long hours—and his growth into a young man. I'm immensely proud of him.

Any graduation is cause for celebration, and it's not just the prospect of an empty nest. Over the last year, I have seen Mac rise to a greater purpose. I get my self-worth when I look into my son's eyes. I get my share of zingers too. He has inherited my sense of humour and can cut me off in mid-rant with his razor wit, which is a mixed blessing. But I wouldn't change a thing.

I know I will miss those late nights driving in my housecoat to pick him up, gosh knows where, at the end of a Friday night, but I'd like to thank Mac for those wonderful years of his journey for the last 17 years, and I look forward to the next. Congratulations to all of Burlington Central High School's class of 2013.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Davenport for sharing their feedback with me about the provincial budget. I want to ask the Premier to listen carefully to their concerns. I've listened; I've heard clearly that people want to see all MPPs working together. People value the constructive role that the NDP has played in this minority Parliament, and they want the government to work with the NDP to avoid an election right now.

People have told me they want to see a jobs strategy for young people, investment in home care for our seniors, action on social assistance reform and regulation of auto insurance companies to bring down rates. And people want to see a fairer tax system in Ontario to fund public services like transit. The NDP has pushed these ideas forward to ensure that these priorities are reflected in this budget, and we have proposed new ways to make this government more transparent and accountable.

We've worked hard in Davenport to re-engage people in the political process and to restore people's faith in democracy and collective action. But it's hard for people to remain hopeful when they see this government continue unaccountable privatization schemes and unfair tax policies that deliver benefits for the few while the majority of people in Ontario struggle.

Even so, people remain concerned that, despite the positive proposals put forward by the NDP, this Liberal budget continues down a path of austerity that will not stimulate job growth or raise new revenue that could rebuild our public infrastructure and support vulnerable members of our community. This is why we hope that the Premier hears these voices and works with the NDP to bring accountability and fairness to Ontario, to help restore people's trust in government and hope for the future of this province.

PETERBOROUGH DAY

Mr. Grant Crack: I rise today, on behalf of the member from Peterborough, to recognize the fourth annual Peterborough Day at Queen's Park. Earlier today,

I had the pleasure of attending a wonderful reception hosted by local community representatives, businesses and other organizations located in the Peterborough riding. It was a great opportunity to see what fantastic contributions Peterborough makes to Ontario's economy and culture.

Some of the groups attending the reception included the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation, Trent University, Fleming College, Peterborough airport, Crosswind Farm, Camp Kawartha, MB Graphics and Events, Minute Maid, GE Hitachi and Molehill Document Management. Also represented were members from the arts and cultural sector in Peterborough.

I particularly enjoyed the fantastic ice cream, provided by none other than the famous Kawartha Dairy ice cream company.

Peterborough is home to a diverse population of nearly 80,000 people, and I certainly appreciate the warm hospitality they showed myself and the other MPPs here today at Queen's Park. I want to congratulate all those involved for another successful Peterborough Day.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING TAX CREDIT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: For a decade now, Liberal policies have crushed growth, jobs and prosperity in northern Ontario. The latest hit from this government can be found on page 262 of the budget, which outlines the elimination of the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit for only contact centres.

There are 25,000 contact centre jobs in Ontario. Eight thousand of those contact centres are in the north. This move directly threatens at least 2,000 northern jobs, many hundreds of them in my community. In fact, the member from Simcoe North told me that it affects 700 in his area as well. Ironically, the \$45 million that this is deemed to save is the exact same amount as the new Liberal subsidy that is being given to the Toronto music industry.

The day after the budget was released, I talked to the president of one of the largest contact centres in North Bay. He told me how valuable the training is and how vital the tax credit is to the industry. Without it, there will be no new hires, and the sector, predominantly located in northern Ontario, will shrink or close. Recently, the mayors of the five large communities in northern Ontario wrote to the Premier to ask that this budget item be reversed.

The PC Party and our leader recently unveiled a firm vision to get the north back on track. Northerners figured out long ago that this government can't be trusted, and it's time to change the team.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Earlier this week, the Conservatives held an open discussion on auto insurance in my

riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton. It was quite ironic considering that on March 27 the entire Progressive Conservative Party voted against the NDP motion to reduce auto insurance by 15%. It's very ironic, and the people in my riding were very curious about that. The insurance plan proposed by the Tim Hudak Progressives only helps big insurance companies make more money. There's no guarantee that any of the PCs' ideas would actually lower premiums.

The Liberals and the Conservatives both just don't get it when it comes to reducing auto insurance rates. They're both set on calling everyday Ontarians "fraudsters" and specifically targeting folks like the good people in my riding of Brampton as fraudsters. They suggested they're the reason for the high premiums. Everyday Ontarian are simply too busy trying to make ends meet than commit fraud. There is a small percentage of folks who are committing fraud, not the everyday folks in my riding or across Ontario.

Auto insurance is mandatory in this province; it's regulated by this government. While auto insurance is mandatory in the province, it should also be mandatory that it is affordable. The government has the ability and the responsibility to reduce these rates to ensure that premiums are affordable. I ask them to do so immediately.

RESOLUTE FOREST PRODUCTS

Mr. Bill Mauro: Yesterday we had two great announcements in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, both at Resolute Forest Products—one at the pulp and paper mill and one at the sawmill.

The first one was the commissioning of their new cogeneration facility, a \$65-million project that we are very proud to support from our Forest Sector Prosperity Fund with about \$9.6 million. This cogen will produce about 65 megawatts of energy; it's going to make Resolute Forest Products very cost-competitive and very cost-efficient in the years ahead.

We're extremely pleased as well to still have contained in the budget a three-year commitment of \$360 million to the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program that will further decrease their energy costs by about 25%. Of course, we're going to need the support of the opposition parties to get that one through.

We also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the sawmill of Resolute Forest Products. They've just hired a third shift there—about 170 people in total working at that particular facility.

In combination with the recent announcements by Resolute—a brand new sawmill in Atikokan, a \$50-million investment; \$30 million to \$35 million invested in their existing Ignace sawmill—this amount of private sector investment by Resolute in northwestern Ontario and Thunder Bay–Atikokan is an incredibly great signal. They are now a fully integrated, very cost-competitive and efficient enterprise, and we look forward to them providing a tax base and jobs in the years ahead.

1510

SOUTH HASTINGS BASEBALL LEAGUE

Mr. Todd Smith: In the words of league president John "Bat" Masterson, it felt more like football weather than baseball, but that didn't dampen the spirits of those involved in opening day festivities for eight teams in the 80th season of the South Hastings Baseball League on Saturday. The league claims to be the oldest consecutively run senior baseball league in Canada. For many families, four and five generations have stepped onto the green grass in Thurlow and Tyendinaga—names like Reid, Sullivan, McGuinness, Farrell, Walsh, Adams, Harrison, Pascoe, Masterson and Barberstock have been synonymous with the SHBL since the 1930s.

In fact, in Saturday night's game featuring the defending champion Latta Rivermen, the starting pitcher was Marcus Sullivan and the guy catching was his dad, 35-year veteran Boyd.

At Saturday's opener, 82-year-old Les Reid threw out the ceremonial first pitch—in his original uniform, I might add—before the Melrose Shamrocks and Uens pole liners game; 86-year-old Buck Pascoe, who has never missed a single season of South Hastings baseball, was in the stands again on Saturday. He played for the very first time as a young teen when a bunch of players got stuck behind a stalled freight train.

People like Gerry Masterson and the late Thornton Portt played key roles in ensuring the survival of the league. Portt contributed financially to improvements at the beautiful ballparks and Masterson has done it all, from coaching to umpiring and heading the executive as well.

It's about time the SHBL was recognized by Canada's baseball hall of fame, and we'll be pushing that forward. Here's to another fine season, and may the call "play ball" be heard for another year across South Hastings.

ONTARIO WINE AWARDS

Mr. Kim Craitor: Last Friday I had the privilege of attending the 19th annual Ontario Wine Awards gala celebration held in my riding of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Tony Aspler, one of Canada's most acclaimed wine writers and an Order of Canada recipient, founded the Ontario Wine Awards in 1995. His vision was to catapult Ontario VQA wines into the most successful and revered wines across Ontario by promoting the top Ontario wineries for the quality product they produce.

This year an outstanding 496 wines were submitted from 78 wineries. Each entry is assessed by blind panels of accredited wine judges, with 26 categories awarding bronze, silver and gold medals. There were also distinctive awards given out honouring the winemaker of the year, white and red wine of the year and wine journalism awards.

To further acknowledge the strong ties between regional wines and cuisine, their annual charity event,

Sip and Savour Ontario, will showcase more than 25 award-winning Ontario wineries and regionally prepared food by local chefs.

During the past two years over \$40,000 has been raised for their charity partner, Houselink. The public will be able to experience Ontario wines and food first-hand at Sip and Savour Ontario, which is taking place in Toronto on the 19th of June in the historic Distillery District.

My hat goes off to our great VQA wines and to our wonderful wineries across Ontario.

BRUCE SAUNDERS

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize a lifelong dairy farmer, Bruce Saunders, who comes from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and congratulate him as a recipient of the 2012 Tommy Cooper Award.

The Tommy Cooper Award is judged based on the qualities of leadership, achievement, volunteer contribution, youth participation and community service. Mr. Saunders succeeded in all of these categories, and it is my pleasure to recognize his hard work and commitment in the House today.

Bruce Saunders is a lifelong dairy farmer, volunteer and advocate of supply management. The 64-year-old recipient studied at the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph, where he majored in crop science. Upon graduation, Bruce returned home to his parents' farm near Chatsworth, where he still farms and co-manages now with his brother Brian. On their generation-held farm of farmers, they milk almost 200 cows and farm 800 acres of corn and barley.

Mr. Saunders's volunteer contributions included work to advance and promote the benefits of supply management to the provincial and federal members of Parliament. Mr. Saunders held the position of provincial director for Grey-Bruce for 24 years on the Dairy Farmers of Canada. He also served as the Dairy Farmers of Ontario chairman from 2005 to 2009.

Mr. Saunders currently works as a supply management advocate in the milk and poultry sectors. We appreciate his optimism in believing that the production quota will remain the same for years ahead.

I'd like the House to join me in congratulating Bruce Saunders on his inspiring achievement.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park on a point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to introduce some folk who have arrived from the social justice tribunal. We have Elaine, we have Breanna and we have Kim in the House. Thank you for all your hard work—not to mention Maggie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests, as always.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WITHDRAWAL OF BILL 40

Mr. Steve Clark: First, I've discussed this with the government House leader, the House leader of the third party and my own House leader: Before I table this bill, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to withdraw my Bill 40 that's presently on the order paper.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville has requested permission to withdraw the present bill. Agreed? Agreed.

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS AMENDMENT ACT (SPOUSAL EXCEPTION), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES (EXCEPTION RELATIVE AU CONJOINT)

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / *Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Steve Clark: First of all, I just want to acknowledge, in the west members' gallery, Maggie Head, the government relations manager for the Ontario Dental Association.

The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act (Spousal Exception): Currently, subsection 1(3) of the Health Professions Procedural Code, which is a schedule to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, sets out a definition of "sexual abuse" that includes certain conduct, behaviour and remarks between a patient and a member of a regulated health profession.

The new subsection 1(5) of the code provides for an exception where the patient is the member's spouse and the conduct, behaviour or remark does not occur when the member is engaged in the practice of the profession. The exception is only available to a member of a particular health profession if the member's college makes a regulation that adopts the exception.

PROTECTING CHILD PERFORMERS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS ARTISTES

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment

industry / Projet de loi 71, Loi visant à protéger les enfants artistes dans l'industrie du spectacle vivant et l'industrie du spectacle enregistré.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: The bill enacts the Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013. The paramount purpose of the act is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry.

Parts II, III and IV of the act set out rules relating to the disclosure of terms of employment, tutoring requirements, income protection, hours of work and adult supervision for child performers. Parts II, III and IV are enforced as if they formed part of the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

Part V of the act sets out rules relating to the health and safety of child performers. Part V is enforced as if it would form part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The act provides that if there is a conflict between a provision of the act and a rule contained in the collective agreement, a contract or another act, the rule that provides the greatest protection to the child performer will prevail.

1520

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR

DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

Ms. Damerla moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 72, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day /
Projet de loi 72, Loi proclamant le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: The bill proclaims April 2 in each year as Pope John Paul II Day. Most of us know that the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights. His legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions and experience.

I would like to acknowledge, at this point, that I build on the work of my colleague on the other side, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who introduced Bill 25, also titled the Pope John Paul II Day Act, 2009, which passed second reading on February 19, 2009. I sincerely hope that this time the bill will be passed in time for April 2014, which will be fitting, because it will also

mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of Communism in central and eastern Europe, something that the Pope had a pivotal role in.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE WEEK

SEMAINE DE LA POLICE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, this week, May 12 to 18, Ontario celebrates Police Week. It is a week during which police services across the province engage with their communities to highlight the work that police do. It is also an opportunity for us in the Legislature to show our appreciation to the police for all they do to serve and protect our communities.

Ontario's communities are safer, Mr. Speaker, and our province is stronger because of our excellent police services and because our government is committed to supporting them in the challenging job they do.

La Semaine de la police est l'occasion, pour les communautés de l'Ontario, de renforcer les liens avec leurs services de police. C'est l'occasion parfaite pour montrer leur gratitude, pour prendre le temps de dire merci à ces hommes et femmes qui ont servi courageusement, et pour rendre hommage à ceux et celles qui servent encore.

Police Week is also a time when we pay tribute to those courageous and dedicated police officers who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Police Week is being observed in May to coincide with Peace Officers' Memorial Day, recognized internationally on the 15th. Ontario's police memorial ceremony of remembrance takes place on the first Sunday in May each year.

Last week, during the annual ceremony, we were reminded of the risks these brave men and women who wear the uniform are often exposed to as we commemorate our fallen police officers. Sadly, we mourn the passing of Constable Jennifer Kovach of the Guelph Police Service, who made the ultimate sacrifice last March in the line of duty. We honour those who, like Constable Kovach, face great risks to protect us, and as we honour their memory, we salute their families and express our gratitude for their sacrifice.

La sécurité communautaire demeure une priorité pour le gouvernement de l'Ontario. C'est pourquoi nous continuons à financer des programmes qui aident les organismes communautaires et leurs services de police locaux à travailler ensemble pour prévenir le crime.

Police Week is also a time to celebrate the steps we are taking to make the province safer.

We have been working to develop an Ontario crime prevention strategy involving police and the community in the search of a holistic and informed approach to preventing crime in Ontario.

Last year, we released a booklet called Crime Prevention in Ontario: A Framework for Action, and we are

now building on that with public consultations. At the same time, we are continuing our work with the Future of Policing Advisory Committee. The committee is determining core and non-core police services in order to provide effective, efficient and sustainable police service delivery in Ontario. Together, our Crime Prevention in Ontario initiatives and the Future of Policing Advisory Committee are helping policing evolve across Ontario.

Evolution is a large part of this year's Police Week theme, which is "Walk the Digital Beat—A New Era of Engagement." The theme highlights the importance of police officers engaging their communities to enhance community safety and the need to employ the latest technology and the most up-to-date media in that effort.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that the partnership between the government and Ontario's police services is a positive and highly effective one.

Ensemble, nous continuons de faire d'importants progrès pour régler les enjeux auxquels nous sommes confrontés. Ces progrès sont un hommage au travail des agents de la police dévoués et professionnels qui oeuvrent au service des communautés partout en Ontario.

More than 160 years ago, Sir Robert Peel, the founder of modern policing, said, "The police are the public and the public are the police." What better way to recognize that than by recognizing Police Week and by celebrating a theme of engagement?

There are many events and celebrations planned for cities and towns throughout Ontario during Police Week. I invite my colleagues in the House to join me in this expression of gratitude and appreciation to police officers in every community in Ontario.

In closing, I'd like to congratulate Gilles Larochelle, who has just been appointed the chief of police in Kingston. He's a great police officer from Ottawa.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm proud to rise in the House today to recognize May as Asian Heritage Month. This month has been celebrated in Ontario and across Canada for more than a decade. It is important to honour the countless contributions that more than 2.6 million members of Ontario's Asian community have made to our province.

Ontario has welcomed newcomers from all over the continent of Asia. Ontario's Asian community has been a vital part of this province for over 100 years. They enrich our province's cultural mosaic and strengthen our economy.

The Asian community has excelled in so many areas, from arts education, health care and science to business and politics. This month, I encourage all people from across this great province to take time to celebrate Asian Heritage Month.

1530

Ontario's diversity is one of our most valuable assets, and we are fortunate to live in a place where every culture and every person can contribute and flourish. Mr.

Speaker, it is an honour to celebrate Ontario's Asian community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

POLICE WEEK

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to rise and respond on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus as we recognize Police Week 2013. "Walk the Digital Beat—A New Era of Engagement" is the theme of this year's Police Week. Like every other service that we have in society today, police are affected by technology, and the newest technology available must be engaged in all facets of society. The police are no exception. One of the very important tools of police today is engagement with the public. The use of social media has led to the solving of many, many crimes over the last few years, and the police's ability to use that technology has been a bonus to them in doing their work.

I was privileged to attend the police memorial a couple of weeks ago. I was honoured and moved as we listened to the names of 248 police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty in this province, starting with Constable John Fisk, the village of York, in 1804, and, as Minister Meilleur spoke about, sadly, Jennifer Kovach just this year in the city of Guelph; 248 names, brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to making our lives safer and better, who have given up their lives in the line of duty across Ontario.

The opportunity during Police Week is exactly that: an opportunity for us—as it says, "A New Era of Engagement"—to engage with our police forces as well and our police officers; an opportunity for members of the public to maybe see a little more. We have the opportunity as MPPs to see a little more closely what police do, because we interact with them a little more, but it's an opportunity for the public to engage with your local police force—the Ontario Provincial Police, if that's who polices your community. If you have the opportunity, remember to say thank you, because those are the people who put their lives on the line each and every day when they leave home to ensure that our communities are as safe as they can possibly be, and our lives are better for it.

As the minister said, Sir Robert Peel said, "The police are the public and the public are the police." In order to have a successful society, we must have a strong police force, and in order to have a successful police force, we must have a society that supports them, engages with them and ensures that they can do the job they do so well to the best of their ability. Police Week is a week that we can celebrate that and say thank you to the brave men and women who continue to serve us.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to acknowledge that May is in fact Asian Heritage Month. For the past 11 years, this event has given us the opportunity to commemorate the history of Asian Canadians and honour their legacy.

Over the last year, I've had the opportunity to visit temples and celebrate the lunar new year with members of our Asian community. In that time, I've acquainted myself with a community of entrepreneurs and innovators, families who came to Canada with little more than the money in their pockets and built up thriving and successful businesses that help drive Ontario's economic engine. The recent census data identified that Markham is Canada's most diverse community, making a testament to how Ontario's diversity can drive its prosperity as well.

Today, we see members of the Asian community active in their communities and successful in various fields, from Patrick Chan, three-time world champion figure skater, to world-renowned scientist and Order of Canada recipient Dr. Tak Wah Mak, to Senator Vivienne Poy, the first Canadian of Asian descent appointed to the Senate. I've had the opportunity to get to know another Senator of Asian descent, Victor Oh, over the many events that I've attended in York region over the last several months. Many Asian Ontarians are playing key roles in making Ontario a prosperous place for us.

Over the last century, Canadian soldiers have gone to Asia to defend the democratic values that we hold dear. Boys from Ontario gave their lives at Kapyong and elsewhere alongside South Korean soldiers during the Korean War. Our common sacrifice and the efforts of the Canadians we have sent overseas have created the reputation Ontario has as a destination where peace, prosperity and democracy reign.

We have always looked at ways to work together as a people and a province, and I look forward to continuing to work alongside Ontario's Asian community on issues that are important to them: respecting taxpayer dollars and standing up for stronger families. Those bedrock Conservative values are echoed in Ontario's Asian community.

POLICE WEEK

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased today to rise on behalf of Ontario New Democrats to mark the occasion of Police Week.

Any time I get to feeling that politics is hard work, I think about the police officers I know who put their lives on the line each and every day to protect our communities.

I come from Belle River in Essex county, and I have family members who also serve the force, and two little kids who look up to our men and women in uniform.

Policing, we know, can sometimes be a thankless job. Therefore, I'd like to start by saying thanks. Thanks for all the work you do. We know you need big shoulders to carry the responsibilities that officers do.

When public safety is threatened, they're always there for the major calls. When minor calls give families major worries, they're there, too. Officers are more than just a uniform. They're our friends and our neighbours. That's why the whole province grieves together when we lose

one of our finest. We must never forget the names of those whose lives were taken in the line of duty.

On my way to Queen's Park, I pass by the Ontario Police Memorial, and only a couple of weeks ago we held the ceremony of remembrance before those statues to pay tribute to the 258 officers from every service whose names are inscribed on the memorial: good cops like Jennifer Kovach of Guelph Police Service, who lost her life on the job this March, and Constable William Rourke, who died serving the people of Cobourg 98 years ago. They stand as examples to every Ontarian, and our hearts go out to their families and friends.

We have a duty to honour their bravery and dedication, and we have a duty to honour wounded officers too, because injuries are injuries, whether they're physical or psychological. I know that police officers see a lot that they'd prefer not to see and that body armour can't protect against every threat. That's why my friend and colleague Cheri DiNovo has worked hard to help cops with injuries, with post-traumatic stress disorder. She tabled a private member's bill to help front-line responders, because police officers in this province are facing shameful delays in qualifying for benefits after suffering PTSD as a result of the job. We can and must do better.

The province also has a responsibility to help municipalities with the cost of good policing. Prompt uploading of provincially mandated services will free the funds that could be used to hire front-line police, buy new equipment and provide training in emerging fields of community safety.

We know that without decent jobs, without a livable minimum wage, without a fair chance to rejoin the workforce, people get trapped in a cycle of poverty. If parents are working two jobs just to make ends meet, then children may fall through the cracks. If First Nations kids are stuck in disgraceful conditions with no access to clean drinking water, let alone a decent education, they then become easy pickings for gangs.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party, I want to thank our men and women in uniform for all the work they do and for continuing to keep our province safe.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my honour to stand today to say a few words on behalf of Asian Heritage Month. Asian heritage is a unique and distinct culture—many cultures and traditions.

I've had the opportunity to travel through some eight nations in Asia and see the diversity of the culture, the diversity of the traditions and the people who live there. The temples, the cities, the arts, the food are totally magnificent, and I commend all of those places to people here.

But all of that and more can be found right here in the province of Ontario. We have people of Asian descent who have lived here for generations and some who have

just arrived only recently, but amongst all of them we have lawyers, lawmakers, entrepreneurs, teachers and men and women of science and of medicine. They have given the world a lot, and they have given a lot to this country. They have made great scientific breakthroughs in the past and continue to do that even until today. They have given Canada much.

I think part of our history that needs to be said, because it is a shameful part of our history, is about the men, particularly men who came from China to build the railway—we treated them, I think, abysmally in times past. We had an Asian head tax. We wouldn't allow them to be reunited with their families.

During the Second World War, we treated our Japanese Canadians in ways that today we are very ashamed of: seizing their properties, their boats and deporting them inland, away from the British Columbia coast.

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But today we recognize—and we need to recognize—the contributions that they made, that their ancestors continue to make, and the diversity that they brought with them to this country and to this province. They have made this place a better place, and all Ontarians now recognize that.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

“Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false ‘fails’, which have resulted in the overcharging

of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I am happy to sign that petition.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I’m pleased to sign the petition and send it to the table with page Samantha.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I might be shutting something down.

The member from Durham.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: “Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning major changes to services provided by OHIP for physiotherapy as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments” per year; “and

“Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year; and

“Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

“Whereas under the changes scheduled for August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

“Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the delisting of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not

proceed and that the provincial government guarantee there will be no reduction in" service quality or guarantee "available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and all those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy" services.

I'm pleased to provide this to Kelly, one of the pages, and support it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move on to the next petition, we can do without the Elvis imitation. Thank you.

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm no Elvis.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I sign this and give it to page Gabriel.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trades...."

I agree with this, and will sign my name and send it with page Jack.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

"Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

"Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers – \$12.20

per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC – \$120 per treatment); and

“Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

“Whereas these services have been provided to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and fall risks;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

I approve of this petition and I affix my name to it and give it to Anjali.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let me guess: Lyme disease.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease”—my colleague is absolutely right—“which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and,

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I’ve received thousands of these petitions. I agree with it wholeheartedly and I’ll send it to the desk with Eve.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were in fact the result of factors other than Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

“Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false ‘fails’, which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

“Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s bill, the Ensur-

ing Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill.”

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature and give it to page Kelly.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jim McDonell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a want of confidence motion has been tabled before the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario remains in power only while it has the confidence of the assembly; and

“Whereas the debate of a want of confidence motion requires the consent of all three parties' House leaders; and

“Whereas the recent scandals, including the Ornge air ambulance fiasco, the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellation and eHealth have shown Ontarians that the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government cannot be trusted with the administration of our province; and

“Whereas it is evident that the McGuinty-Wynne government has lost the confidence of Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately exercise its prime duty of holding the government accountable and bring a want of confidence motion to debate at the earliest opportunity.”

I agree with this and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

WANT OF CONFIDENCE MOTION

Mr. Steve Clark: Whereas a motion of want of confidence is one of the most serious parliamentary tools available to any opposition party throughout the Commonwealth that uses the Westminster system of Parliament;

Whereas motions of non-confidence are generally moved against governments when governments conduct their affairs that breach the trust of the people;

Whereas it is not only parliamentary tradition but convention that when a motion of want of confidence is called against a government, that the government in question will want to dispense with such a motion so as to prove to Her Majesty and the people that they still retain the confidence of the House and moral authority to govern;

Whereas the failure on the part of any party to agree to call any such motion for a timely debate and vote is not only an affront to democracy but shows disrespect and disregard toward the will of the people who elected members of an assembly;

Therefore, it is the opinion of this House that the House leaders of all the three recognized parties shall schedule for Tuesday, May 28, 2013, a debate and a vote on the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe—Grey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Clark has moved opposition day number 4. Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I believe that Ontarians want and deserve a vote in this Legislature to determine if the Liberals have the confidence of the people. I urge all members to vote in support of calling the want of confidence motion for debate.

The Liberals' unwillingness to bring our want of confidence motion forward shows the arrogance with which they have treated this entire scandal and refusal to deal with the consequences.

Premier Wynne has said that the budget motion is the only test of confidence the House needs. Well, Speaker, with all due respect, she's wrong. Taken literally, the budget only pertains to the budgetary policy of the government, not confidence in an overall sense. In contrast, our confidence motion allows for a more comprehensive test of the confidence that the House has in the government, setting aside the political auction sales that the last two budgets have become in this minority Parliament.

My colleagues and I in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus have been hearing from our constituents and people across the great province of Ontario that this Liberal government has lost the moral authority to govern. Speaker, this is not a charge that we make lightly. This is a very serious matter requiring very serious measures. In order to understand the sentiment of frustration and lack of confidence which is present in so many Ontarians, it's important to put into context the events that have led to the tabling of Mr. Wilson's want of confidence motion.

Speaker, upon first glance at this Liberal government's record over the past almost 10 years, someone might say that, obviously, the reason why the opposition is now calling for a test of confidence in the Wynne government is because of their horrible record. I mean, in the last 10 years that the Liberals have been in power, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs; and they've watched idly as 600,000 Ontarians struggle to find work across the province. In fact, the jobless rate in Ontario continues its five-year streak of exceeding the national average. The Liberals have implemented policies which favour union leaders and reduce opportunities for the individual worker by hindering economic growth. Furthermore, to fund those policies, they've increased taxes, all while managing to double our debt and turn us into a have-not province in the process.

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Unfortunately, Speaker, complete economic failure doesn't even manage to break the top five Liberal most appalling examples of mismanagement. The Wynne government has an inherent problem with mismanagement and waste. Ontarians have watched as \$2 billion was wasted in the eHealth scandal. Then countless patients

were put at risk and millions of taxpayers' dollars were wasted in the Ornge scandal.

In light of the emerging gas plant scandal, where the government schemed to understate the true cost of cancelling the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants by hundreds of millions of dollars, we contend that the Liberals have again betrayed the trust and the confidence of the people they claim to represent. They took deliberate steps to hide who was responsible for deciding to cancel the gas plants and deliberately withhold public documents. How can the government House leader continue to refuse to call our confidence motion? To me, it's a dereliction of his duty.

Hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition dictate that any vote can be designated as confidence by the government, and that any government that can't command the confidence of this House should resign. By refusing to call the confidence motion for debate and a vote in this House, the government demonstrates its belief that it might be defeated if a vote was held. If Premier Wynne doesn't believe she can command the confidence of this House and the people of Ontario, what gives the Liberal Party the right to govern? After all, we all know it wasn't the people of Ontario who gave her the mandate to govern; it was, rather, 800 Liberal delegates in a downtown convention. Perhaps that's why she's actually avoiding a real measure of confidence in her leadership.

Now, what concerns me most about today's debate is that I already know—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge and the member from Timmins-James Bay, if you want to have a shouting match or talk loudly across there, take it outside, because I can't hear him. You've got four seats between you. Why can't you go sit beside him or why can't you go outside? I don't get it.

The clock—it doesn't matter on the clock. All right, go ahead.

Mr. Steve Clark: It matters to me, Speaker, just so you know.

What concerns me the most about today's debate is that I think I already know the flawed arguments the government is going to put forward. I have to tell you, Speaker, that there's one thing the Liberals can manage to do effectively, and that's bamboozle the facts. The government House leader can stand in this Legislature and say that former PC governments never called a want of confidence motion, so why do they have to? What the Liberals fail to differentiate here is that the want of confidence motions were not put forward in a minority Parliament facing its third consecutive billion-dollar scandal like this government is facing.

To my colleagues, I can't stress enough that today's debate is vital, as it indicates a deeper problem with this government's lack of respect for democracy; specifically, a breakdown of responsible government. I think we all know how our system works in the Legislature. I think that in a Canadian democratic system we all need to be responsible. This government, in a minority Parliament,

has to speak for the 107 members, and I think today's opposition day really sets out the tone about how this minority will work.

To friends in the third party, either the NDP believes that the gas plant scandal, the largest in Ontario's history, is worthy of a confidence vote, or they are prepared to prop up a corrupt Liberal government. We look forward to the third party standing in their place and supporting us in our want of confidence motion.

Just to close, Speaker, I want to quote the leader of the third party on April 15: "Of course, we find ... that the Liberals not only spent millions and millions on their private power deals but they did everything they could over the last several months to hide the information and to downplay the real cost to the people of Ontario...."

"They put the needs of their own party in front of the needs of the public interest. Now families are stuck with the bills."

Well, to you, the leader of the third party, we in the Ontario PC caucus agree that the Liberal actions are simply unacceptable, and they deserve to be held to account. Let's get real results for the people of Ontario and vote in favour of our motion today.

If a vote on our motion determines that the will of this House and the majority of members in this Legislature express that the want-of-confidence motion should be brought forward for debate, then I think it's a serious affront to democracy if Gilles Bisson and John Milloy don't call it for debate. In my opinion, that's simply unacceptable. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Leeds-Grenville is well aware that he uses titles, not names.

Mr. Steve Clark: I got excited, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You got excited? I'm excited, too. Don't do it again.

The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Boy, that was interesting. I didn't know that the third party House leader had so much power. I'm going to have to reread the rules of the Legislature and the standing orders to find out just how much power we really have.

Listen, let's be really clear about a couple of things here. The rules in Ontario are very different than the rules in Ottawa. In Ontario we have the right, as the opposition, to file an opposition day motion. But, unfortunately, the reality is only the government can call it.

If we were having a debate where we say, "Maybe we should make changes to the standing orders," so that the opposition, as we used to have, once upon a time, the ability to not only file an opposition day motion, but make it a matter of non-confidence—that would be one thing. But we don't have those rules in the House. They haven't existed in some time.

I might stand to be corrected, but that was changed under the Conservatives, if I remember correctly. I'm just looking over at the table to tell me if I'm correct: that the loss of the use of non-confidence by the opposition was lost at the time of the Tories is what I remember, or it

was us. One of the two. Or maybe the Liberals. I can't remember. But in recent time, that has been changed.

But the point is, this motion could be voted on unanimously by all members of the House and it wouldn't mean anything. Why is that? Because, number one, an opposition day motion is non-binding. In other words, we can all, as a House, vote to do something, but just because we vote to do it as an opposition day motion makes it that it's non-binding to the government. So we can all stand in this House, we can all vote for it, but at the end of the day, the government can or can't call it, depending on what they want to do, because, first of all, it's non-binding as an opposition day motion, but second of all, the standing orders are clear: The only way a non-confidence motion filed by the opposition could be brought forward is by the unanimous consent of the three party House leaders, and in this case the government House leader doesn't want to call it.

So what is the point of doing this whole debate? It is a stunt. The Tories have essentially dealt themselves out of the budget process. They've said, "We are not going to read a budget. We are not going to think about a budget. We're not going to look at a budget. We're not going to have any discussions about a budget. We made up our minds, and we're just going to vote it down, because we're Tories, and what do we know how to say? No." So that's as simple as what's happening here. The Tories have put themselves in a position of dealing themselves out of the budget process.

Is it easy trying to put together a budget? Absolutely not. New Democrats have done a fair amount of work, consulting with the people of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, well. It was awful quiet when your guy was speaking. I don't want to have to start shelling out treats.

Continue, member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So the Tories have effectively taken themselves out of the process and have offered nothing when it comes to the contribution of the most important thing that we do here, which is a budget. A Parliament has been established over the years for essentially one basic reason, and that is in order to deal with the expenditure of money. That's the primary purpose of a Parliament. What was King John and Magna Carta all about? It was about taking the power away from the crown to tax so that we, the people, the commoners, can have the ability to decide how much we tax and where that money's going to be spent.

Here we are, many years after the Magna Carta. We're going through development of a budget, and the Tories, essentially, are saying, "We want no part of it, because we made up our minds. We're saying no to everything, and the only thing that's important to us is our Conservative political self-interest, which is to have an election." Well, that may be what's good for you as Conservatives, but that doesn't make you any better than the Liberals, because the Liberals, quite frankly, have done things for their political interest. What we're saying as New Demo-

crats is, no, there has to be an opportunity to be able to try to put ideas into drafting a budget. Once you put the ideas forward, if the government says, "No, we don't want to hear those ideas, and we're not going to amend those ideas," then it's up to the parties that are suggesting the ideas—in this case, the New Democrats—to say yes or no.

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We have given the government a number of asks. The government has come back and has responded more or less positively on those things that we've asked; there are a few little edges that we would still like to see, but then we said, "Listen, there has to be accountability."

We all know, and I agree with the Conservatives—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —for once. That's what politics is about: give and take on all sides of the House and on the side of the opposition.

But I agree with the Conservatives in that this government has made lots of announcements over the last number of years. They've announced, for example, that they were going to have \$36 million at AMO a year and a half ago. That money was going to be available to rural municipalities. All the mayors and councils in our communities ran around and said, "My God. Finally we've got some extra money to deal with infrastructure." Hardly any of that money was able to be got. Why? Because they made the requirements for acceptance of your application so tough that very few municipalities got it.

We're saying there's a problem of accountability here. The government is good at making announcements. They're not very good at making good on those announcements and essentially saying that those things that are said in the budget or in a bill actually happen. That's why we, as New Democrats, after the budget was read, said, "Listen, there have to be accountability measures."

We said, for example, that we need a parliamentary budget officer that looks at the expenditures before the money is actually spent, so that if a government says, "We want to invent a new air ambulance system," the budgetary officer would be able to look at it and say, "That makes sense. That doesn't make sense. It's going to cost X, Y or Z." At least then, the House and the government know the full knowledge of what this is going to cost and how it's going to work. We possibly could have averted Ornge if we had a parliamentary budget officer.

It's interesting to note that Stephen Harper had that idea in the wake of what happened with the Liberals, the Gomery scandal with the Liberals. It was a good idea, so what was one of the first things that Mr. Harper did when he became Prime Minister of Canada? He put in place the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Guess what he did at the end of the mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Officer? He won't reappoint. Why? Because the Parliamentary Budget Officer said, "You've got a big problem with your F-15s. It isn't the amount of money that you said it's going to be; it's a heck of a lot more."

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: F-16s?

Interjection: F-35s.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: F-35s. I'm a pilot, and I don't even know my planes.

Interjection: You don't know numbers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry. That was the American F-number, I guess; I don't know.

The point is, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been giving greater scrutiny to the Harper government, Harper has felt uncomfortable, because he's not able to control the message. Now what is he doing? He's not doing a reappointment. He's taking his sweet time to reappoint the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Clearly, that office has had good success in averting what could be billions of dollars of expenditure unneedingly.

For example, in the case of purchasing new jet aircraft for our country, the Parliamentary Budget Officer probably saved us billions of dollars as a result of the work that he did and that the public and the opposition were able to shine light on in regard to that. We're saying here in Ontario—Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats—that it's not good enough for a government just to make an announcement. What we need to have is a process by which there is clarity, transparency and accountability when it comes to government decisions, so that we don't end up with eHealth, we don't end up with Ornge, we don't end up with gas plants, we don't end up with chemotherapy problems, as we have seen, and Presto, and others—and now HOV lanes, if they go forward with that. We need a parliamentary budget officer to look at it. And we have said that we also need to make sure that the Ombudsman has some ability to be able to look into the health sector, to be able to look at what's going on, so that hopefully we are able to deal with these issues before they become serious.

Now, will the government, in the end, accept? It's in the government's interest to do so, I think, and in the public interest. Now it's up to the Premier of Ontario to decide if she wants to accept those ideas, but here's the point: We will have a chance at the end of this process to vote up or down on the government, based on what they do. If the government says, "We don't want to have accountability," there's going to be an opportunity—either in the budget motion or, if we choose, at the third reading vote of the budget—to be able to deal with this.

There is a process by which to hold government accountable, and what's important to us as New Democrats—and, I would argue, what should be important to the public—is that we should be trying as much as possible as we are here and now, especially in the minority Parliament, to be able to effect the changes that are needed. Because guess what? If the Conservatives or the Liberals were to be elected as a majority government, should there be an election, I doubt very much that they would do a parliamentary budget officer. I doubt very much that they would do a 15% reduction in auto insurance. I doubt very much that there would be a five-day wait time for people who are trying to get home care. I doubt very much that there would be an initiative to

give youth jobs in the province of Ontario. I doubt very much that we'd stop giving largesse to the large corporate sector when it comes to tax cuts and loopholes while the rest of us at home who work hard have to pay. And I doubt very much that they wouldn't go down the ways, with a majority, of putting toll lanes all over the province to pay for their transportation initiatives. So it is—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, first warning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would argue that in a minority Parliament it's a good opportunity where we all have to temper our position and we all have to pour a little bit of water into our wine. The government wants to do certain things; the opposition wants to do other things. We need to find a way to be able to accommodate each other so the right thing is done for the public. I think that in a minority Parliament you can make that happen.

I'm proud to say that I'm a member of Andrea Horwath's caucus and a New Democrat, because we came to the last budget process and we're into this budget process—we didn't win everything that we wanted. There's certainly more that we would like to have done on other measures, but we were able to make changes that make a real difference to people's lives. If we can get the government to agree that accountability measures will be put in place as a result of this budget process, I think that is not just good for us as legislators, I would argue that it is good for the public. That's what this is all about.

It's interesting—my note disappeared. Oh, it fell on the ground. This is how I give speeches, by the way—three scribbled little lines on a piece of paper. I just wanted to make sure to hit a couple of points—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I should have known that. I agree with the member; that would have been a really good thing.

I do want to say, though, on the gas plants, again I'll agree with the Conservatives. On the gas plants, clearly there has been a wrong done to the people of Ontario. The wrong was that the government, because of political reasons, made a decision to cancel those gas plants to save a couple of Liberal seats. It was a Liberal seat-saver program. I agree with you and I think we are in lockstep on that.

We, during the last election, as New Democrats didn't play that game. If people remember what happened in the last campaign, Andrea Horwath, the leader of the New Democratic Party, was asked point-bank by the media: "Would you scrap the deal that builds those gas plants? Would you scrap the Samsung deal?" And we said, "No. We will not scrap contracts that we have not seen. It would be irresponsible to do so. How much could that cost the taxpayer if we were to make a promise now during the election because of political reasons and find ourselves having to face a bill in the millions or the hundreds of millions of dollars because of cancellations?"

We said in the last election that we should not make promises because of political reasons when it came to those gas plants. That's a tough position to take, but that's what leadership is about. I'm sure that our Mississauga candidates would have loved to have heard Andrea Horwath say something different, and I'm sure they said different things. Such are local campaigns; we all know how that goes. But the party had made a decision because of the leadership of Andrea Horwath, and that decision was that we would not scrap contracts sight unseen.

Were we troubled with the decision to build the gas plants in the first place? Absolutely. We said that we would have never built them there in the first place and, number two, we would have never done them in the way that the government was doing through the private sector; we would do it through the public utility.

We first wouldn't have built it, but when it came to the contract we were very clear that in fact we would actually not scrap those contracts sight unseen. It's been rather unfortunate that the government has tried to paint this as we're all in this together, that we all said we would scrap those contracts. We never said such a thing.

But I also want to propose something else in this. In our system of democracy, there is a presumption that a person is not guilty until they've gone through due process. You can accuse somebody of something. You can say, "You stole the thing out of that store," and the police can go and charge you based on the evidence that they have. But you have the right to a trial, and it's only after a trial, either by the judge or your peers, depending on if it's criminal or civil, that there's a decision made on how to deal with the penalty if you're found guilty.

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In the case of the gas plants, it's the same thing. This House has essentially created a process that is asking the committee to take a look at who refused to release the documents when it comes to the gas plants, what were the conditions by which the decision was made to scrap those and all matters relating to the gas plants, and report that back to the House.

For this House to all of a sudden say that before that process is finished, we're going to truncate that, we're going to stop it and we're going to jump to a conclusion before all of the evidence, is in I think is contrary to what this place is all about. We've been asked as a committee to look into this matter. Do I think the government did wrong? Absolutely. Do I think that this reporting will be damning? Absolutely. The evidence I've seen so far says the government is in a lot of hot water, and they're going to have to answer for the bad decisions they made that cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, between \$700 million and \$1 billion.

But my point is that there has to be due process, for two reasons: One is because our system of law is based on the ability to look at the evidence, allow the person to refute and rebut the evidence, and then for a decision to be made, once all the evidence has been presented. It's like that in the courts, and I would argue that this committee process, when it comes to the question of

contempt, is a very serious matter that we have to deal with. And for us to jump to a conclusion before all the evidence has been gotten—and those on the government side have to have a chance to be able to refute that in some way before this House goes back with a recommendation—it would be, in my view, somewhat premature to jump to a non-confidence motion at this point.

This committee will report. It will report this spring, and it will report next fall, and when that committee reports its final report, we will have a decision to make in this House, because the committee will say, "Here is what we found and this is what we recommend, that we deal with the contempt issues that Mr. Leone rightfully brought before this Legislature as a result of the government refusing to release those documents." At that point, we will have a decision to make. We will have a decision to make as to what happens with that motion, how we frame the motion and how we vote on that motion when it comes into the House, and in that framing of what comes to the House I have to imagine there will be some sort of penalty possibly that will come back with the recommendations.

For us to have a non-confidence motion vote at this point I think is a little bit odd. But the bigger issue to me is—I can agree with you, my friends, that there be a non-confidence motion, the government can agree that there be a vote as a result of this, but we all know that at the end of the day it is the government's prerogative when to call an order before the House, so it doesn't matter what we do on this opposition day motion.

The last part I just want to say, because I do want to leave my good friend Mr. Marchese some time—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm a fair kind of guy; I've got to leave him some time.

I just want to end on this point, to say that it is easy to do nothing—it is easy to do nothing. It's easy to criticize, it's easy to point the finger and say it's all the government's fault, it's easy to look and always—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: All right. When you get up and debate, you can make that point. But my point is that it's easy to criticize, it's easy to point the finger, it's easy to sometimes not bring forward solutions. What Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have attempted to do—and it's yet to be seen if it will be successful, because the government has to look at what they're going to do on the accountability measures that we've asked them for—is that we have put forward a series of asks that are reasonable, that don't cost a lot of money, that provide for accountability on the decisions the government makes, and now it will be up to the government to decide.

But we did not shirk our responsibility as legislators in the New Democratic Party. We made sure that we rolled up our sleeves and we did what had to be done. Is that easy? Absolutely not. It's a lot easier to take pure positions of saying that we're opposed to everything and we say no to everything, but in the end, it doesn't add and it

doesn't contribute to what our job here is as legislators. And for that reason, we will not be supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Jim Wilson: When our PC leader, Tim Hudak, asked me to be his House leader, I was honoured. I was honoured to assume a unique role within our parliamentary system and I was honoured that our leader would trust me with this role in the midst of the minority Parliament. Sure, I knew there would be tough times, that dealing with my Liberal and NDP counterparts would come with some tension, but what I did not expect was the outright refusal of the Liberals and NDP to call a want of confidence motion for debate and a vote.

To provide some history and context in the modern era, we can look back to March 1782, when Britain suffered a defeat at Yorktown during the American Revolutionary War. The British Parliament said that it "can no longer repose confidence in the present ministers."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that sentiment holds true today right here in this Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada, in the great province of Ontario. You see, confidence is a political concept. It is more so political than it is parliamentary. Why do I say that? Because in a minority Parliament, the government must be willing to retain and hold, on an ongoing basis, the confidence of the people's chamber.

The Premier says, in public and in this House, that the test of confidence will come with the budget. However, she says this as if it is the only test of confidence allowed. Over the weeks of the budget charade that have engulfed this chamber, it is clear that the Liberals were and are willing to stop at nothing to stay in power. To that end, they have in essence used their budgetary powers to buy off third party support to pass the test of confidence on the budget.

So is the budget a real test of confidence? Mr. Speaker, I would suggest not, because the government has already secured NDP support through promises it will no doubt break someday down the road.

In our standing orders and in the rules that govern Commonwealth Parliaments throughout the world, opposition parties, especially those who retain the title of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, not only have a duty but a right to move motions of confidence or non-confidence in the government at any time. It is not up to the Premier or the Prime Minister to say which motion is the only confidence test they're willing to take. Rather, governments of the day can declare any measure they want a confidence vote, but they also have a dual obligation to respect the will of Parliament and to bring votes of confidence put forth by the opposition.

The issue before us, precluding an automatic vote of my want of confidence motion, is an obscure clause in our standing orders unique to Ontario that requires all House leaders of recognized parties to agree to call the motion for a debate and vote. While this obscure and

arcane clause may exist, it is not right for the government to breach an ancient parliamentary code that has existed for centuries. Our system was amended many years ago to preclude opposition parties from abusing their use of want of confidence options set forth in the rules. This made sense when governments held majority status, because the result was a foregone conclusion.

However, we are in a minority Parliament. The very fact of refusing these motions when they sit on the order paper is, in and of itself, an admission that the government does not retain the confidence of this House.

This goes to the root of the problem we're all facing here in the Legislature today. The Liberals have not been working for the people of Ontario, but rather they have been working to protect their own political power and their own interests.

Mr. Speaker, on the order papers sits a motion that I moved on April 29, 2013, that calls the government to account for the fact that they have spent literally hundreds of millions of Ontarians' hard-earned tax money to save their own political fortunes through the cancellation of the gas plants.

The government opposite, under both Premiers McGuinty and Wynne, have treated the treasury as the Liberal Party's business expense. Some might call it corruption; others will call it an abuse of power. More still will call the actions, or lack thereof, of this government and of the third party to call the want of confidence for a vote an affront to democracy.

The ancient parliamentary right of confidence has not been used extensively. It's a legitimate and well-meaning tool for opposition parties in a democracy to hold the government to account. The Liberal government and Premier Wynne must be held to account for their actions in a scandal that is arguably the largest our country has ever seen. Ontarians deserve a government that puts their interests ahead of Liberal politics and the Liberal Party.

My colleagues and my deputy House leader, Steve Clark, tabled this opposition day motion today to shame the government and the NDP into explaining why the Liberals and the NDP are blocking a vote on this scandal-plagued government. Is the price for the NDP support so low that leader Andrea Horwath and her NDP colleagues could be bought with some trinkets in a budget to get so-called results for people?

1630

You want to talk about results for people? How about calling a motion that would help to rid the people of this scandal-plagued government and restore the people's faith in their political system?

Is the price so low for the NDP's support that leader Andrea Horwath is willing to look the other way while Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne buy an election and then bury the scandal by blocking access to the truth and burying the numbers deep in the books?

Ontarians deserve better, Mr. Speaker. Ontarians deserve a say. Does the NDP still have confidence in the Liberals? Does the Progressive Conservative Party still have confidence in the Liberals? And do Liberals who

actually look at themselves in the mirror after what they've done still have confidence? I suspect, Mr. Speaker, when all consider the huge waste of money on the gas plants, Ornge, eHealth and the subsequent gas plant cover-up, the answer will be a resounding, "No, we do not have confidence in this government."

As PC leader Tim Hudak said yesterday at the justice committee, if the Liberals were willing to spend the money they did to win the 2011 election, not with party money but with the people's money, how can you trust that they will not do it again and again?

Every extra day the Liberals remain in charge not only means more lost jobs, more out-of-control spending and more debt, but it means another day that Ontarians see their elected officials letting the government off the hook for the largest scandal in Canadian history.

The real question here today is, how will the NDP square their position of propping up such a scandal-plagued government? Any student of politics knows that motions of non-confidence are common in multi-party systems, especially in minority governments. The way to avoid losing such a motion is either to get a majority yourself or to form a coalition. So I ask, if the Liberals and the NDP have formed a coalition, then let's see who sold their soul and for what price.

If there is no coalition, then I hope the NDP will support us today. I hope the Liberals across the aisle, especially those on the back benches or those dropped from cabinet or never given the chance to guide the Liberals' moral compass, help us to pass this motion and force the government's hand to take the test that Parliaments around the world must pass—the ultimate test, one of confidence.

Mr. Speaker, there are times when the decisions we make in this place impact history and impact precedent throughout the Commonwealth. It's now up to the NDP today and those Liberal MPPs who know that what this government has done is wrong to vote with the Progressive Conservatives and pass this motion to shame the government into calling the want of confidence motion into their gas plant scandals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Let me say from the beginning, I won't be supporting this motion—just so that you know.

I used to give the Liberals a lot of advice in the past because I thought they were going in the wrong direction. I tried to be helpful with ex-Premier Dalton McGuinty, and they didn't listen. Often I said, "I'm just trying to help you." I want to do the same thing to you because I think you're moving in the wrong direction again. I could be wrong, but I believe you are moving in the wrong direction.

I've got to tell you this: You guys are so negative. Each and every day, you are constantly saying no to everything. It used to be something that they used to accused the NDP of; it's true. You did it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to direct it through me and not have

conversations with two groups. You're supposed to go through the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It used to be that the NDP was labeled as negative, and now the Conservatives have been doing it for years.

Again, through you, Speaker, the Tories have become so, so negative that it looks bad on you. It particularly looks bad because you are an established party that longs for power. You have been 10 years out of power, and you're itching to get it back. I know; I understand. Except, when I try to say to people in my riding that some of you are not bad—really, at the personal level—they say, "No." I say, "No, really, they're not bad as human beings. They're really nice people. I like a lot of them." They won't have any of it.

But I have to agree with them on the ideological front. Through you, Speaker: I agree with many of my constituents; you guys scare me—you do.

I want to remind you of a couple of things—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On the ideological front, you scare me. At the personal level, I like most of you, but on the ideological front.

I have got to say that when we look at Liberal scandals—and there are a few Liberal scandals to be sure; I'll name them in a couple of moments if I have the time—the Tory scandals are worse.

Interjection: Worse? How could they be worse?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Let me to tell you. I know you're asking. Let me to tell you.

Interjection: Through the Chair.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, of course, Chair, in case I'm looking there or there. I get distracted sometimes.

The 407 was the biggest fiasco that I have ever, ever seen in my 24 years in this Legislature. Talk about scandals. That was the worst. They have so much faith in the private sector—God bless. The private sector was drooling each and every day on that one, and the spittle could be seen each and every day for years. The private sector couldn't get enough, for years.

The 407 sold for a mere \$1.2 billion for a hundred years—as the movie would go, a hundred long years—and the government helps them to collect the fees. If people don't pay up, they lose their licence or they don't get their licence renewed. That's courtesy of the Conservative government. What a great deal for the private sector. So much faith they have in the private sector that they've given it all away to them for a hundred years. How do you feel about that? Surely some of you must cringe at the thought of what you did. Oh, but no; let's just talk about Liberal scandals, because that's probably a lot better, isn't it?

Then the consultants—let me to tell you about consultants. The Conservative government came in saying, "We are the anti-establishment party. We are the non-government government. We are going to reduce government to a minimalist role, and we're going to fire thousands of workers"—which they did, and what did they do after,

the Conservatives? They hired them back as consultants. It was beautiful. You let them go, you have incredibly huge buyouts—because you've got to pay them—and then, because they're experts in the field and because you need them, you bring them back at a huge consultant cost.

You've got to love Conservatives. You've got to love them. Bring down government, and pay a whole lot more to bring them back as consultants. You guys are really good. You are good. You just don't know how good you are, and your faith in the private sector is unbending.

What did they do with Ontario Hydro, which used to be public? They privatized the whole system.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Eleanor Clitheroe, remember?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, Clitheroe. Let's not talk about her. She's now a minister of the cloth, and she's doing good things. It was a big payout, but it's another problem.

They privatized hydro. So much faith they have in the private sector that Bruce was leased for 16 years, and on the first year that they leased that Bruce plant, they made \$165 million—\$165 million that government could have used to bring down its debt and deficit. But no, "The private sector does it better. We need to make sure they take the money away from governments and the public so that we can give it away in profits." The same Bruce power plant that couldn't give the money back to government, we privatized it by leasing it out for 16 long years. And then we're going to get that back and pay the billions of dollars to revamp them, because they need to be revamped every 15 or 20 years, and it will be at the public cost—not at a private cost, but at a public cost.

1640

I can see how attuned Conservative members are. They've become silent all of a sudden—which is good. And then they created 14 gas retailers, each and every one of them with a new scam each and every year. The government can barely keep up with them, because no sooner do they come up with another scam than the Conservative Party calls for restraint on the very people they set up years ago, when they were in government. But no, "We need to have faith in the private sector. They do it better. When they don't, maybe we'll come up with some scheme to rein them back, or at least blame the Liberals for not reining them in." But they're the ones who set them up.

Do you remember the eHealth scandal that the Liberals are enmeshed in, and have been for a long time? Do you know who started that?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, some of you do remember. It was the Conservatives. The member from Simcoe-Grey would remember, and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills would remember, because they were both here. They had spent \$250 million on eHealth and they had nothing to show for it. God bless, you guys are good; you're really good. But the blessing you had is that the Liberals came into power and they continued with the scandal in eHealth. And then we could just blame the

Liberals for the scandal and forget about the fact that you guys started it. "But that's history. Don't talk so much about the past. Let's talk about the present. Let's talk about the scandals they're in." But it's difficult, because my constituents just bring me right back and they remind me of all the things that you have done. The member from Halton Hills, your corporate tax cuts are the best. You guys are the servants of the private sector. You guys are at the beck and call of the corporations. No sooner do they call than we serve them—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't have the standing order in front of me, but I think he is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's 23.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's 23. He's trying to assign motive of why we're here to represent our constituents. The last time I checked, the people of Nepean-Carleton sent me here; 130,000 people live there. I have colleagues here from across the province who consider themselves workers of the people, not servants of business. I'd like him to correct his reference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't think that's a point of order. The member is simply going down history lane. He will continue. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: History lane. There was a time during those terms that the Tories were in power—I would have loved to have had a non-confidence motion each and every day that they were in power. When Mike Harris was here, I would have loved to have had a non-confidence motion. The member from Niagara West-Glanbrook is here—because he was here at the time. Boy, would we have needed these motions each and every day. They cut corporate taxes to the tune of \$13.5 billion in an eight-and-a-half-year period, and what do we have to show for it? Nada. That's Spanish for nihil, and that's Latin for nothing. Nada. Some \$13.5 billion that these servants of the corporate sector gave away, with nothing to show for it.

Mr. Ted Arnott: How about a million jobs—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, the member from Halton Hills talks about jobs. There is absolutely no evidence that you have given \$13.5 billion away and we've got good jobs as a result of it. What we now have is a worldwide economy that's moving into casual work, temporary jobs, precarious work. And you know it; all Tories must know it, because they have constituents facing that problem. We have a workforce that's working part-time and on contract. That's the economy that the legacy of Mike Harris has left us, continued, of course, courtesy of the Liberals currently in government.

We have a Conservative Party that people are afraid of, where they're going to take away the defined benefit plans, the pensions of workers. If workers, I tell you, do not have the income security they desperately need, we are in trouble as a people. Now, the Conservatives say, "We can't afford these pensions." I tell you, we can't afford not to have good pensions for people to retire on,

because if people don't have money, they don't spend. If people don't spend, that very economy that Tories support, that marketplace, that range that Tories love, would collapse.

We are a consumer society: 60% to 70% of our economy moves on the basis of people spending. If people don't have any money and they don't spend, capitalism—the very thing you fine Tories love—will collapse.

Mr. Rob Leone: No.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, they say no. I'm looking forward to arguments from my Conservative brothers and sisters.

By the way, the Conservatives left a wonderful, strong economy with a \$5.5-billion deficit, and they sold the 407 for \$1.2 billion and left us with a huge deficit of the good economy. These are the wonderful managers of our economy. Do you want that? People in my riding say, "No. God, no. God, no. Don't put them in power ever again."

I know Tories are hungry to get back. I know that they love what their federal counterparts are doing, where they have billions of dollars wasted on consultants and we don't know what work they are doing. Who do you think those 34,000 people taking money from the public sector are except the Conservative brothers and sisters they have milking the public trust and the public trough? The Tories are in a hurry to get back so they can help their Conservative friends here at the provincial level.

Do people in my riding want more of that? No. No, no, no. They fear you a lot. And at the personal level, I like you. At the ideological level, I fear you as well, I have to tell you. So this is the problem I have with this motion of non-confidence on the Liberal government.

The problem I have is that while we've been very critical of Liberals on the eHealth scandal, which they have continued under a fine foundation that you people set up, and the Presto scandal that has ballooned from \$250 million to \$700 million, and the Ornge scandal that continued under your watch without any supervision whatsoever, and the gas plants that you continue with under their privatization scheme that you seem to continue to like—these are unforgivable scandals, no doubt. We agree with Tories on that, just as I disagreed with them on their scandals. And the Lord was merciful that when an election came, they were finally turfed. God bless.

But the former Premier whose name is Mike Harris left with a wonderful pension that he was able to get and left so many Conservatives without one. I don't know why some of you still don't burn on that one. He left as a millionaire, killing our pension. He called that pension—what did he call that? The golden pension? He takes a million dollars and leaves you broke to handle what's left. He did okay. But you guys are not here for the money, I know. You're here for the principles. You're here to serve the little guy, I know.

So while we disagree with many of the scandals that the Liberal government is plagued with, we continue to say that minority governments are here to serve people.

They are not here to serve political parties; they are here to make the lives of people better. Our job as an opposition party is to get out of a Liberal government what we believe is important to them, to make their lives a little better, which is why in the last budget we fought to make sure that the millionaires, those who earn over \$500,000, get a surtax of 2%, allowing them and us to get a little more money back that you desperately need. We needed that. We needed that amendment—we needed to get those changes in the last budget—and we got it.

1650

The Tories said no to the budget. They didn't even want to read it. They said, "No, we don't have to read it." They said, "This year we don't have to read it. We don't need to know anything. We just want the Liberals out." The NDP are saying that we want to make changes that are good for people, and to the extent that we can get it out of Liberals, we will do it. We got a surtax that even Tories—I'm not even sure Tories liked it, and I'm not sure many Liberals liked it, but I know that half of the Liberal caucus liked it, and they pushed. We got that. We got some child care, we got some health care dollars for the north—

Hon. James J. Bradley: You know we were going to do that anyway.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, you weren't gonna do nothin'. You weren't gonna do nothin' unless we pushed you, and we made some gains for working men and women in this province.

We're doing the same in this budget, where we say we need a five-day home care guarantee, because people are struggling as soon as they leave the hospital, and they have no guarantee that they will get home care. We struggled to get that. We wanted jobs for young people because we know that when they leave university, there is no work for them, and so we struggled and pushed the Liberal government to make sure that we'd get jobs for young people.

We want to make sure we reduce auto insurance for people, because we have the highest insurance rates in the country, so we struggled to get that. We pushed them on closing tax loopholes so we could bring in some desperately needed revenue and bring down our deficit and debt. The Liberals haven't done that.

And we struggled to push them on accountability. All governments, no matter which party is in power, need to be held accountable. It's for that reason that we pushed for the financial accountability office, and we continue to push for accountability, because people need to have it, and they deserve it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I listened intensely to the member from Trinity-Spadina, and I think he's doing his level best to try to make this Parliament work. Some of the comments clearly were aimed at us as a government, and that's part of the job here. I think some of his comments also were aimed at those people who have brought the motion forward today.

There's a process we have in place, there's a budget process that's being undertaken right now, and the idea, I think, and what the people of Ontario expect, is to see all three parties trying to work together to make this minority government work. We put a budget before the people and before this House, and the third party, I think, to the best of its abilities, has attempted to respond to that, has stepped to the plate and said, "There are certain things we like in the budget, and there are other things we'd like to see included," and that has led to a process that I think is being undertaken to ensure that this process keeps moving forward the way that people had hoped minority government would work.

The other party, however—I don't think to its credit—has decided, before it even read the budget, that it wasn't going to support the budget. How you cannot support a budget you haven't read, I don't know, and I don't think the people of Ontario understand that either. But certainly what I think has taken place is that people are trying to undermine the process here, trying to bring forward a motion that I just don't think has any place in this House. I, for one, am not a supporter of this motion. I don't suspect that it's going to receive a lot of favour from those folks on this side of the House, and from the comments that I've heard from the third party, it sounds like it's not going to curry any favour over there.

What I would like to see happen is that the three parties would try to work together to ensure that this process moves forward, that the budget is dealt with, that those things that the Conservatives would like to see included in the budget could be at least considered and the process could move forward the way it was intended to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I have been listening with interest to the discussion that's been going on now for several months, and I chuckle to myself, as someone who is now in my 29th year here—to talk about some of the financial scandals that rest with that party. They keep saying that the two gas plants is the biggest scandal in the history of the province. Compared to what went on under the Conservatives—and I want to tell you, the biggest seat-saver scandal is the Allen expressway, which runs through my riding. One day Larry Grossman said, "Jane Jacobs has got a movement going. We've got to kill this thing."

Here it is. It was built from Steeles down to Lawrence and it expropriated all the land down to the waterfront, and they stopped it. Nobody said anything about it. They just said, "Wow, isn't that great. They listened to the people." So they stopped it.

All you have to do is take a look at what happened with the subway going along Eglinton. They dug it all up and they decided, "No, we're not going to go ahead with it," and they filled it all in, again spending hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

But the most interesting thing was that in 2003 they tabled their budget and said it was balanced. When we

formed the government, the Auditor General said, "You've got a \$5-billion shortfall." And for months and months and months, the Conservative Party kept saying, "You don't know what you're talking about." If you take a look at the record, the Auditor General said \$5 billion didn't show up in the budget. So don't try to tell us what we are doing. All you have to do is look in the mirror and look into history and you'll see some of the things that went on with that government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd say it's a pleasure to join in today's debate, because it's always a pleasure to speak in the Legislature, but in terms of my attitude and the attitude, I think, of the government members towards the motion that's been put forward today, it is clearly an unnecessary motion. Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, as members are aware, the standing orders of this Legislature in fact prescribe how a motion of a want of confidence can be brought forward. It's very clear how it should be done. In fact, it's under section 44 of the current standing orders and it outlines that a want of confidence motion should be brought forward with the agreement, the consensus of all the recognized House leaders, the three House leaders.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The Harris government wrote those rules.

Hon. John Milloy: Actually, I correct the Minister of the Environment. It was not the Harris government; it was the Davis government. It was a Progressive Conservative government that brought it forward.

In a sense, the standing orders are very clear on how such a motion should be brought forward and dealt with, which makes today's opposition day motion, quite frankly, unnecessary and really not relevant to the whole process—

Hon. James J. Bradley: They're playing a game.

Hon. John Milloy: —and, as my friend the Minister of the Environment says, political games.

Mr. Speaker, I draw attention to the obvious: Had the Legislature wished at that time when those rules came forward to prescribe a specific time period, they would have done it. But instead they came forward and talked about the consensus between the three parties.

I would also remind members that this is not a new phenomenon, the situation where opposition members come forward with a want of confidence motion. It happened quite often during the Harris years. I'm not surprised, when we think about the record of Mr. Harris in government. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, those motions were allowed to sit on the order paper. In fact, they were allowed to languish on the order paper. It doesn't take long to do a little bit of research to in fact find that on many, many occasions Mr. Harris's government chose not to even call them. They sat on them for so long that prorogation or an election actually ended them.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I say, there is a process in place and there's absolutely no need to have this opposition day motion today and I can certainly assure members the government will not be supporting it.

There's a bigger question, and that is, when is the appropriate time to have a confidence motion. I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that right now it would be a redundant act because right now we are in the midst of or on the—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Member for Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, sorry, it's hard to think sometimes when we have the heckling across the way.

1700

But I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that we are right now in a situation where in the coming weeks—in fact, I can guarantee members that in the coming weeks we are going to have a confidence motion in this Legislature and that confidence motion is going to be on the budget. As members are aware, within 12 sessional days, eight hours of debate, the budget motion needs to come to the floor of the Legislature. As I stated in question period today, a government that cannot pass its budget is a government that cannot function and automatically must go to the polls.

I want to assure members that there will be a confidence motion, and should the government win that motion and continue on, the expectation, of course, is that we will have further votes on budget bills in the coming weeks, or the budget bill, the second reading, committee stage and third reading, so there will be opportunities for the opposition to vote on it.

And these are important votes, Mr. Speaker. This is an important budget that's been put forward. There's a lot at stake quite frankly, and we look forward to support from the opposition on this. It is a budget which outlines a vision for the future, a responsible vision, a balanced vision where we are on target to meet our deficit targets, but at the same time making key investments in a number of very crucial areas.

I think of my own community, the work that's being done in terms of youth unemployment and the importance there. I think of the increased expenditures in home care, targeted expenditures which, again, will benefit so many.

I think of the bill itself and the provisions in there on the Ontario Child Benefit. I think all of us recognize the important role that that initiative has played in terms of reducing poverty in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I think of the work that's been done on auto insurance and the work that we want to do to make sure that savings within the system are passed on to consumers, again, something that's part of the budget bill which will form a confidence motion here in this Legislature.

What's being put forward today is simply a game. The fact of the matter is that this House will have the opportunity to pass its judgment on the confidence of this government, which brings me to the actual substance of the want of confidence motion, which is the gas plant issue. This is a matter which is before a committee of this Legislature, before the justice committee, and I think—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Appropriately so.

Hon. John Milloy: It's appropriately so, and they are holding hearings. I congratulate the members of that committee. They are working diligently. There are concerns there about some of the activities that have taken place, but let me try to put the whole gas plant situation in a little bit of context for members, those of you who are interested.

Let's start at the beginning, Mr. Speaker. I believe there were 19 different gas plants which were sited within this province: 17 of them we got right; two of them we did not get right. We did not get them right, and the people of Oakville and the people of Mississauga rightly raised concerns. The government took a look and decided in the case of Oakville to cancel it a year or two before the election, and in the case of Mississauga we went into the election campaign and said that we would cancel it if we were elected.

But what's very interesting—and the opposition refused to acknowledge—is that we were not the only party to have gone into the last election making that commitment. In fact, I remind members that it was the opposition Progressive Conservative Party which aggressively campaigned against the gas plants in the last election.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I saw the pamphlets.

Hon. John Milloy: My friend the Minister of the Environment talks about pamphlets, pamphlets that were sent out to thousands of people saying that the only way to stop the gas plant was to elect a Progressive Conservative government.

I think of the robocalls that were sent out in Mississauga South from the local candidate, where he asked members to consider voting Progressive Conservative because it would be the only way to end the gas plant.

I think of the Leader of the Opposition, who was the star of a YouTube video, where he toured the facility and said, "If you vote for me, the gas plant will be done, done, done."

Hon. James J. Bradley: I saw him on YouTube.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I have to pause when I think of the Minister of the Environment watching YouTube. He's moved into the 21st century.

The fact of the matter is, the Progressive Conservative Party cannot have it both ways. As I said both in question period this morning and question period yesterday, you can't stand up and say that a political party that promises—or to stand up and say when the Liberal Party promised to end the gas plants in the last election, it was the worst thing to befall western civilization since the plague or the invention of the Macarena, when you yourselves stood up in the last election and promised the exact same thing.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Promise made, promise kept.

Hon. John Milloy: Yes, exactly. A promise they made—their promise—we kept.

We wanted to provide some context, so what did we do? We asked the Leader of the Opposition to come before the committee that's looking into it. We expected him to at least acknowledge their opposition to it. We

expected him to discuss the costing, because obviously, with the importance they put on this and the number of hours they've spent in this Legislature discussing it, we were all very confident that they would tell us about the costing they had undertaken, the experts they had consulted and how, when Mr. Hudak became Premier, he would be cancelling the plant—all the homework and the due diligence they had done; in other words, hold them to the same standards to which they have been holding the government.

But we were shocked. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't appear in front of the committee. It took week after week after week. He finally showed up, and we asked him some very direct questions—simple questions; not technical questions, very direct questions. We asked him, first of all, to acknowledge his opposition to the gas plants. We asked him to talk about the due diligence into funding that they had done, and we asked him to tell us about the experts he had consulted and the work he had done with his candidates who had sent out the press releases and had the Twitterverse and the YouTube videos.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? He was there for 90 minutes. We asked him 28 direct questions. He would not answer a single one. He would not even acknowledge the fact that he had stood in a YouTube video and said—

Interjection.

Hon. John Milloy: Sorry, I thought you were getting up, Mr. Speaker.

He did not even acknowledge the fact that he had starred in a YouTube video where he stood there and said, "If I am Premier of this province, this gas plant will be done, done, done." It's called a double standard, Mr. Speaker. You can't stand up and say, "The fact that the Liberals promised to cancel it is a huge scandal, even though we promised to cancel it." Their words of criticism ring hollow. They are wasting the time of the Legislature with this motion that they are bringing forward.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks this afternoon, there is a process through the standing orders by which a want of confidence motion could be dealt with. It has to be dealt with by consensus among the three House leaders, and I can tell you, as the government House leader, that we have some very, very important issues to deal with in this Legislature. We have the budget, we have the budget motion, we have the budget bill and we have a very long list of bills on the order paper that we want to get through to committee.

If the question is that the opposition wants to express confidence in the government, those votes are coming. I want to guarantee you all: They are coming within the next several weeks, and that will be the opportunity they are looking for. For that reason, we will not be supporting this motion, and quite frankly, as far as I'm concerned, we've said the last words on this frivolous motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pleasure to speak this afternoon to the opposition day motion of my colleague from

Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Clark. I want to thank him for his insightfulness and thoughtfulness in bringing forth this motion.

I want to comment, first of all, to the government House leader, and how disappointed I am with the attitude of an officer of this Legislature who dismisses 140-some years of parliamentary tradition, the standing orders that have been worked on by parliamentarians since Confederation, which clearly state that an opposition party has the right to put forth three want of confidence motions per session.

It is not about the budget. It is not about the budget motion. It is about the right of the opposition to operate freely in this chamber. The third party has the right to bring two want of confidence motions—not ones that the government House leader is going to draw up, not ones that he wants or they want, but the right of the parliamentarians in this chamber to check and ask for a want of confidence motion as to whether or not this government continues to have that confidence.

It is not a game as you play it, when you play games every day with your gas plant silliness, bringing in the Leader of the Opposition. We're serious about the lack of confidence that we have in this government, and we have maintained that for some time.

1710

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that former Premier Dalton McGuinty indicated on October 15 last year that he had lost confidence in his government and in his ability to continue to govern as Premier. He prorogued this Legislature and walked away because the gas plant scandal was weighing so heavily on his shoulders that he decided, "I would rather leave than face this fight." Well, we are bringing the fight to the Legislature because you people won't.

I want to comment a little bit on my colleague from Simcoe–Grey and my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, who talked about the other scandals in this government: the eHealth scandal that is a \$2-billion fiasco and counting; the Ornge—not only hundreds of millions of dollars, but lives lost.

If this government wants to talk about scandals of previous governments, why don't they bring up the railroad scandal that Sir John A. Macdonald was involved in? They might as well.

It is your government that is on trial here—not any previous government, but your government, which was elected in 2003, promising a new era of accountability, civility and being answerable to the people. What we've got is the height of arrogance. This government has grown arrogant over its 10 years, and what we are seeing with the gas plant scandals today is just the icing on the cake. It's the cherry on top of the sundae.

I am so disappointed in the way that they have handled this.

People across Ontario lack confidence in you. They're not going to get that chance, because we already know that your friends in the NDP have made it very clear they're going to prop you up on the budget.

I am disappointed in the NDP. I am disappointed when a party comes into this House each and every day and points across the aisle and talks about the corrupt government; talks about this government that has no right to govern any longer, that has lost the faith of the people, that refuses to be accountable, and in the afternoon, when they have a press conference, they talk about how it's very important to keep it going.

I heard the member from Trinity-Spadina talk about principles. Well, he wants to keep his job. But his principles—the way they'd like to run a government, I hope when he does retire that he finds a villa in Greece, because that seems to be the country he likes to emulate.

Speaker, the lack of principles on the part of the third party and the way they've conducted themselves over this budget debate and the gas plant scandal—every day, they ask questions about the gas plant scandal and say that this government has no right to continue. And then, when the rubber meets the road, you people are going to do what you did in the past. You're going to prop them up, and we're going to have to wait while this province continues to spiral downward. Your responsibility is to stand on behalf of the people of Ontario and give them the chance to make a judgment on this party.

Speaker, we have the right, as the opposition party, to bring a want of confidence motion. We have done this in a responsible way. Yes, we do not have the power to singularly force this to the floor of the Legislature. We cannot, as the opposition, bring this motion forward. The government can stop us; the third party can stop us.

Speaker, with everything that has gone on since the 2011 election—and I've been at those committee hearings on the gas plant scandals, and the conflicting testimony from Liberal after Liberal; the attempts to cover each other; to protect Liberal operatives; to protect Liberal cabinet ministers; to protect Liberal Premiers—we've seen it over and over again. The committee has no power to actually pass judgment. The people have the power to pass judgment. So I submit to you, while we do not have the legislative power, the members of this Legislature have the moral responsibility to allow this Legislature to vote on a want of confidence motion.

If the government believes, as it submits that it does, as it claims that it does, that they have the confidence, then why would they be afraid to bring this motion forward? If they believe they have the confidence, if they believe that the third party has confidence in them, then bring this forward and let the third party tell us and let them tell everybody out there in Ontario that they actually have confidence in this government. As they say, Speaker, when the rubber meets the road, that's when we really find out where people are.

We're taking this opportunity to ask this Legislature, on behalf of the people of Ontario, who are frustrated—all you had to do was read the newspapers, read the polling, read the data: 60% of the people believe that the Liberals have actually lied and covered up this scandal. Those were the polls, and that was the question: Do you

believe the Liberals have lied? The answer was a resounding yes—a resounding yes.

We're speaking for the people of Ontario. We want this Legislature to have an opportunity to pass judgment on this government. You can do it. If you believe in democracy, if you believe that this chamber is elected to represent Ontarians, then you'll allow this motion forward. If you do not allow this motion forward, it is clear that your arrogance and your cowardice trumps what you believe is your moral responsibility to govern. If you cannot govern morally and responsibly, then I submit that you should no longer govern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to join the debate on the opposition day motion brought forward by my good friend from Leeds-Grenville.

A lot has been said over the last 24 hours, in the sense that the Premier has offered an apology with respect to the gas plant fiasco that embroils this government. We can certainly debate the sincerity of that apology. We can also debate the timing of that apology. But what we're doing here today is to figure out whether the Legislature actually accepts that apology. We can find out whether they accept that apology by calling a want of confidence motion right here today and supporting this opposition day motion.

To my friends in the NDP, a lot has been said over the last few weeks about holding this government accountable and making sure that we improve transparency, and they say that as if they can divorce accountability and transparency from getting results for the people of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government spent \$600 million of our money, the people of Ontario's money, to save five Liberal seats. If we want to improve and get results for the people of Ontario, we could have used that \$600 million to build some schools, some hospitals, some roads, some bridges. We could have done so many things with that money.

If we really want to ensure accountability and get results for the people of Ontario, we have to change that government.

Before entering this place—and I still consider myself to be one—I feel that I am a student of our parliamentary democracy. One of the central features of our parliamentary democracy is that we have responsible government. I think that what we've seen in the debate that we've had today and what I seek in participating in this debate is, we have to return responsible government back to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, 1848 is the year we won responsible government in the province of Ontario. Responsible government means three things: It means that the cabinet of this Legislature is responsible to the crown, it's responsible to the people of this Legislature and it's responsible to the people of Ontario. That is what responsible government is. But we have no mechanism today to ensure that on this issue, on the gas plants issue, that this government continues to have the confidence of this

Legislature. It's why we continue to press that, on this issue, we should hear what the people of this Legislature have to say about that government and their handling of the gas plant fiasco, which is why we desperately need, to ensure that responsible government is here to stay in Ontario, a want-of-confidence motion to see what this Legislature says about how this government handled that fiasco.

1720

Responsible government is also about being responsible to the people of this province, and the people of this province obviously are represented by the men and women in this room, but at the end of the day, we can have apologies all we want, we can have excuses bestowed and uttered by that government all we want, but there is one true mechanism of accountability that the people can have, and that's to have their say, in election, on how they handled this gas plant fiasco. That is how the people have accountability in our system. It's the most obvious, most straightforward mechanism by which we can express whether we believe that the government has done a good job on this file or a bad job on this file. We have to understand what the people have to say. You can read the polls—and I know the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has done a good job uttering what the people have said in those polls—but as we know, the only poll that counts is the one on election day, and I'm pretty sure that the people of this province want to change that government.

We won responsible government in 1848, and what I'm very much worried about is that in 2013 we are losing responsible government in our province. To me, that's completely unacceptable, the fact that we're losing responsible government today. I know that we are going to have an opportunity to express confidence in this government on the budget. I can say, with confidence, that this party will not prop up your scandals. You want that budget vote to be a confidence matter, and we're happy to oblige, but what I say is this: When it comes to the mess that they created, when it comes to the obfuscation of the facts, when it comes to wasting hundreds of millions of dollars, I know in my heart of hearts—I know that Ontarians agree with me—that we no longer have confidence in that government.

I think something is happening in this Legislature that's very odd. It's very remarkable. I've heard lots of talk about the standing orders being the way they are. I know the Minister of the Environment has heckled about how Mike Harris changed the standing orders and that the NDP are agreeing with that. It's funny how the tables have turned, and that it's actually the Liberals and the NDP who are agreeing with Mike Harris. I think that's a very interesting point.

I also have to say that the member from Timmins–James Bay spoke at length about how Stephen Harper actually had a good idea. He likes the parliamentary budget office, which is fine, but I have to say that Jack Layton must be turning in his grave when the NDP start agreeing with Conservatives. I think that's something that we have to express very clearly, and when it comes

to this issue, when it comes to supporting what the gas plant file has done, we don't have confidence in this government. I urge all members of this Legislature to put this question to the floor right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I was not going to speak on that, but I wanted to say right away here, very clearly, that I'm not going to support that \$100-million motion—I'm not—because we, like the House leader was saying, pretty soon will have a confidence motion, and all three parties will be able to vote on the motion. They will be able to vote on the budget, but they said, even before the budget was written, that they were not going to support it, and they offer no suggestions.

I have to congratulate, in a sense, the third party, because they read the budget. Even before reading the budget, they offered options, and most of their options were in the speech from the throne, and you can read them in the budget right now.

It was very interesting that the member from Trinity–Spadina took us down memory lane—things that I had forgotten. I tend to remember good things, but I didn't remember all of these scandals from the Conservatives when they were in power: the 407, eHealth, Ornge, the Eglinton subway. So all of these, I did not remember them.

Like the Premier, I entered into politics because of what they have done. I was very happy in municipal politics and I would have stayed in municipal politics, but—

Interjection.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for your good comment. But I decided to come to the provincial Legislature because of what they have done.

In eastern Ontario, there were quite a few issues that were put forward by the Harris government. One that is very vivid in my mind is the closure of the Montfort Hospital. I'd like to remind them that even though it was not a recommendation—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, we never closed the Montfort. That's an utter lie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Even if it was not a recommendation from the committee that was tasked with reviewing health care in eastern Ontario, they changed the recommendation from that group, and suddenly, Montfort Hospital was to close. Thanks to the good people of my riding in eastern Ontario, Ottawa–Orléans, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and the city of Ottawa, the hospital now is well. We gave them money to expand, and it's a very good and very well-functioning hospital. We have doubled the number of beds there.

I don't want to take more of your time. The \$100-million motion I don't want to vote for—they will have

their chance later on to vote for the budget, and we will see. If there is dissension within their party and they want to get rid of some of their colleagues, it's their problem, not ours, and I'm not going to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The leader of the official opposition.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I rise this afternoon to debate our want of confidence motion, which we called this opposition day motion, because I envision an Ontario where people have good jobs to go to. It's a place where hard work and talent are rewarded with more take-home pay, and people have the confidence to buy a home, raise a family and start a business; in short, Speaker, where we can look forward to tomorrow as much as today.

But I'll let you in on an open secret: That's not the Ontario we have today; in fact, just the opposite. Ontario has a big problem, and it's time that we stopped kidding ourselves about it. Some 600,000 of our friends, our neighbours, our relatives woke up this morning with no job to go to. We know from the recent Liberal budget that spending is going up, not down. The deficit actually goes up, not down, and the debt is going up, not down.

Our economy is stalling. This Liberal government has dug a deep hole, and it's only getting deeper and deeper because this is a government that has put its own political interests ahead of the interests of average Ontarians, with another billion dollars added to the debt to buy the NDP's support for this budget and with the politically motivated decisions to cancel gas plants at Mississauga and Oakville, no matter what the cost. Hundreds of millions of your dollars the Liberals spent just to win a couple of seats, to try to buy a provincial election, and then followed by concealment and cover-up, missing and blacked-out documents.

Ontario needs a new path. For that change of direction, we need to change the team that leads this province. Only the PC Party has a plan to make government affordable again, to make it accountable again—a government that treats taxpayer dollars with the respect they deserve, a government with a focus on the number one priority of our times—jobs and the economy—and one that restores Ontarians' confidence that they've got a government that serves the people, not the other way around.

Ontarians deserve a say in whether they still have confidence in this government. Every extra day with the Liberals in charge means more lost jobs, more spending and more debt. That's why I urge all members to support this motion: to clear the air; pave the way for a more hopeful, confident, prosperous province of Ontario; to clear a path so we can finally make a decision that must be made to get our province back on the right track; to bring jobs back to Ontario; to deliver dependable health care and excellent education; to break gridlock.

That's the course that we must take. Ontario can and Ontario will do better. We can restore hope for our people, put the province they love back on track, but only

if together, in this place, right here, right now, we do the right thing. We support this motion and we—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —course of change to this great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Clark has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be a 10-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1733 to 1743.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Clark has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakubuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Gélinas, France	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadi, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczeck, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Schein, Jonah
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Del Duca, Steven	Marchese, Rosario	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 35; the nays are 59.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1746.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 16 May 2013

Jeudi 16 mai 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Since I wasn't here the other day, I'm not sure exactly to whom I'm replying, but I'd just like to make a few comments on the budget.

You know, this is really a great budget for people of Ontario. When you look at the fact that we're investing another \$700 million of the people's money, through our taxes, in home care over the next three years—if there's one issue I think that surely every member in this House can agree upon, it's that elderly people want to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Survey after survey indicates that, and they should not go into a long-term-care home until it's absolutely necessary. One way in which this can be done is to provide the support services that elderly people need in their own homes. This is probably the area where, consistently over the years, I get the most number of calls, quite frankly.

I think we have set up a good system in Ontario over the last number of years. You may be interested in knowing, Speaker, that I was a member of the board of health in Kingston back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the Kingston public health unit became the first public health unit in the province to actually supply home care services to elderly seniors so they could stay in their own homes. From that system, which started in good old Kingston—the Limestone City, Canada's first capital—the home care system we have in the province of Ontario developed.

Speaker, let me just say that, sure, there are sometimes individual situations where we hear from people that

perhaps the services aren't available as quickly as they should be, quite frankly. We continually work with that, each and every one of us in our constituency offices, to help those situations. But one way in which we can really deal with that situation is to pass this budget so that the extra \$700 million that is required in home care can be distributed across this province and the elderly can stay in their own homes much longer than is currently the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here when the member from London—Fanshawe spoke on this bill, and I commend her for making some insightful remarks. I'm really holding my breath to see—if they really look at this budget, they're going to find out it's actually a disaster, and really the whole thing here in this House, with all due respect, hinges on the decision of the NDP.

Now, I want to frame this a little bit, so the people of Ontario know what's happened. You know, in the last 10 years, the budget in Ontario has pretty well doubled. You should ask yourself, are you any better off? Not only that, but the debt itself, the accumulated debt—that's the credit card, that's the mortgage on the house. They've taken out a second mortgage. We had a debt of \$139 billion. Now the debt is \$273 billion.

To put this in a little broader reference, some debt is good. A mortgage on a home for your family is good debt. A mortgage for going out to clubs is bad debt. They have a lot of bad debt. The gas plants: We don't get the gas plants; we're paying for them, but we're not getting them, do you understand? So that's bad debt. That debt is measurable by any amount. Then you look at servicing the debt.

Servicing the debt is almost \$12 billion a year. That's the third-largest expenditure. So this government has a significant structural fiscal problem, and I say to you and to the pages here, on their last day, that this debt is your taxes of the future. Not only do we have the highest tuition in Canada for you when you go to university or college—that's debt, because tuition is a tax. Electricity is a tax. Those are controlled by the government—services provided to the public—and there are charges attached to some of them. All of them, including physiotherapy for seniors—as of August 1 it's going to be a debt on seniors. This government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, an honour to stand here on behalf of my constituents and respond to some of

the comments made earlier by the member from London—Fanshawe, and I think I'd like to respond to some of the comments made today.

Yes, we have a responsibility with this budget, and it does, in large part, hang on the decision of our caucus. It will rest on the decision of our caucus, and we take that responsibility very seriously. We believe we were brought here to look at what was presented and try to make the best decisions on behalf of our constituents.

That's one of the reasons why we're pushing so hard for an accountability office. We firmly believe that only in a minority position do we have a chance to get this, because, quite frankly, majorities of all types don't really like accountability, and when they do—when the Harper Conservatives put it in, they didn't like it either. They would love to back out, but it's a good thing.

It's a good thing, because the difference between an accountability officer and the auditor—the auditor performs a vital service, but he performs that service after the deal is done. It's very easy for governments, for parties: “We promise \$700 million here, \$300 million there.” You know, you can promise and announce the same money three times over. An accountability office could say, “Okay, here's what's been promised, but here's what's actually happening in real time,” on a non-partisan basis. It's not about gaining points; it's about an actual, real-time accounting of what's going on. That would benefit all the people of Ontario—it really would—and it would benefit government as well, because then they could see problems before they become scandals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

M. Phil McNeely: Je n'étais pas ici pour le discours du membre de London—Fanshawe, mais j'aimerais parler un peu de l'ouvrage, le travail, pour les jeunes.

La stratégie ontarienne d'emploi pour les jeunes fournira 295 millions de dollars sur deux ans pour appuyer les initiatives qui favoriseraient les perspectives d'emploi et l'entrepreneuriat et l'innovation pour les jeunes de l'Ontario :

—le fonds ontarien d'aide à l'emploi pour les jeunes, avec 195 millions de dollars sur deux ans, afin d'ouvrir de nouvelles perspectives d'emploi pour 25 000 jeunes;

—le fonds ontarien d'aide aux jeunes entrepreneurs, avec 45 millions de dollars sur deux ans, pour appuyer la prochaine génération d'entrepreneurs via le mentorat, le capital de démarrage et le rayonnement de l'entrepreneuriat;

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—le fonds ontarien d'innovation pour les jeunes, avec 30 millions de dollars, pour diriger et gérer les activités de recherche, de développement et de commercialisation au sein d'une industrie et aider les jeunes entrepreneurs dans les collèges et universités;

—le fonds pour une meilleure adéquation entre la formation et l'emploi, avec 25 millions de dollars sur deux ans, pour appuyer de nouveaux projets pilotes novateurs.

Le plan de l'Ontario pour l'emploi et la croissance repose sur de solides assises économiques soutenues par des politiques et des investissements du gouvernement dans six domaines.

Alors, je supporte bien le budget. On devrait travailler très fort pour l'emploi pour les jeunes, et le programme qu'on a ici est certainement quelque chose qui va aider les jeunes.

I spoke mostly in French in my response to the member from London—Fanshawe, but I think it's so important that we do get that youth employment going. There is a real need in this province, so let's support the budget and get on with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London—Fanshawe can respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to all the members who contributed to the debate on G65.

Yesterday, the leader of the New Democrats met with the Premier, and they sat down to talk about some of the proposals we have made since the budget was released. One of the things we have said many times over is that we've had a minority government elected to the 40th Parliament and the people have asked us to make things better for them and get results. In a minority government, we all have to talk to each other in order to come up with the best policies and legislation for the people of Ontario.

But this government also needs to be held accountable to the people of Ontario, and we've heard that. We've had our phone lines and we've had our websites and our constituency offices, and people are saying, “We elected a minority government. We want results, but we need to hold this government accountable for the things that have happened.”

A financial accountability office can help stop these kinds of scandals before they get to this pinnacle point of no return. That financial officer can certainly prevent these scandals like Ornge, eHealth, and the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, where billions of dollars are wasted. The people of Ontario don't deserve to have public funds misused that way.

We need to make sure that public funds are used for education, health care and infrastructure, to look after the people of Ontario. That's what they put trust in us for. They put trust in us to make sure their public interest is being looked after, and we need to do that. One thing that New Democrats have said we should be doing is having a financial accountability office to make sure this doesn't happen and we hold governments accountable for where they spend the money.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's my pleasure this morning to rise and speak to this debate. The budget, as we know, is an important document; I would say probably one of the most important documents we discuss in this House. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to some of the issues that relate to me, both as Minister of Children and Youth Services and as the MPP for Windsor West.

Let's be clear: The challenges we face in this province can seem daunting and complex, because they are. We

live in the shadow of an uncertain global economy. We are confronted with many challenges. We have an aging population, and young people who need jobs. Because of all that, it can often feel as though we have to choose among our priorities: to say that we can balance the budget or improve education; we can invest in our roads and bridges or reduce wait times at our hospitals. It's really tempting to oversimplify things. It's tempting to reduce public policy to an either-or equation, but that's not the way forward.

This proposed budget bill offers a clear path forward that creates prosperity for Ontarians while making sure we're protecting our most vulnerable. Our approach to this budget is one that started with the people of Ontario. It's based on discussions we've had across the province. We also heard from people in my riding of Windsor West, and we continue to get their feedback on why this budget needs to pass.

First, if I may, I'd like to speak to certain investments this budget protects and strengthens in crucial services for our children and youth. Through this budget, our government is proposing to add another \$5 million for children's treatment centres. These centres provide rehabilitation services for youth up to 19 years old with physical and/or developmental disabilities, chronic illness and/or communication disorders. This additional investment is very important for these children and youth and their families. It will support a pilot program to help children across the province transition into school. This investment will also expand the family-centred children's rehabilitation information system to five children's treatment centres in northern Ontario. This budget also increases the Ontario children's benefit, which we know has benefited thousands of families across the province. Investments like these that we make today in our children's future are one of the best things we can do to give them a bright and secure future.

This budget also addresses another major concern of people across Ontario and in Windsor-Essex, and that is economic renewal and job opportunities. Last week, I spent some time speaking with business leaders in Windsor and heard this loud and clear. I talked to them about how this budget will help create jobs for the region and give local businesses a competitive advantage. The response was positive, and I felt genuine excitement from the community.

We need to move forward on this budget bill so that we can invest in the areas that matter most. That's why a key element of this budget is our investment in jobs for our youth. I might say, my first job out of university was as a supervisor at an employment centre for youth, so this is something I'm very excited about. I've heard from so many people across the province, and especially in Windsor-Essex, that youth unemployment must be a priority. The \$295-million investment will complement our comprehensive youth jobs strategy by giving businesses financial incentives to hire, train and sustain skilled youth workers. The comprehensive approach to creating jobs for youth certainly responds to what I've been hearing in my community.

As you may know, I'm the mother of two boys. They are 12 and 17, and my 17-year-old is lucky: He has a part-time job. I'm also a former director of employment and social services for the city of Windsor. Based on those experiences, I can tell this House that a comprehensive approach that incorporates mentoring, partnering with employers and financial incentives for job creators is an approach that works. Our budget invests in people, and I truly believe that investing in people works.

There's also a youth entrepreneur and innovation fund. So if a local youth has a great idea for a successful business, their dreams can become a reality.

We've also created the first-ever Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities to engage with youth, young professionals and community partners, so that young people across the province get the right training and job opportunities and have the tools they need to succeed. Who best to listen to for a youth strategy than the youth themselves?

As well, we aim to give businesses a better environment to grow and prosper. Our budget provides greater employer health tax relief to small businesses by increasing the tax exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000 of payroll, beginning next year. It would save up to \$975 per year for employers. I can't tell you how many small businesses in Windsor have told me that they're pleased with this move. For businesses that need to purchase new machinery and equipment, our budget extends the capital cost allowance to 2015. That would reduce Ontario tax on manufacturers over the next three years.

Speaker, as the MPP for Windsor West, I am also proud of the investments made in this budget for my region. Our government recognizes that Windsor has a unique economic base that must be supported and nurtured. This budget continues with this government's commitment to the southwest development fund. Since its launch last fall, the government has committed \$15 million through the southwest development fund, attracting a total investment of nearly \$120 million and helping create and protect 2,200 jobs.

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As well, some of you may know that Windsor is home to the busiest border crossing in Canada, where so much of our trade takes place. The province begins at Windsor. That is why our vision for a prosperous Ontario means a significant investment in infrastructure to ensure businesses get what they need on time—because time, after all, is money. In Windsor-Essex, that means that the Herb Gray Parkway, the 401, Highway 3 and other major transit routes will continue to receive provincial funding for widening and maintenance.

On top of that, this budget proposes to make the gas tax for municipalities permanent. Just last year, the city of Windsor received more than \$3.6 million from gas tax revenues. What that means for my riding, Mr. Speaker, is that this permanent funding will allow the city of Windsor to provide vital municipal services to residents.

The government has made important gains in making Windsor-Essex a better place to live and work. I know

that the people in my area directly took part in creating this budget. They are expecting that this Legislature will do the right thing. The budget really is for all Ontarians. It is really incumbent upon all of us to ensure that this province can move forward prosperously and to ensure a fair society. If passed, it will absolutely help build a more prosperous Windsor West and a stronger Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's important to recognize that a member from cabinet stands and of course endorses the budget. She's part of the same team that was there making decisions on wasteful spending in the province, which troubles me, you know. Really, this budget, if you look at—

Hon. John Gerretsen: John, say something positive.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, with respect, she is a member of cabinet. I respect that. She'll be given orders to do this and that. She has a tough ministry, I would say, as well. It's a very important ministry. But the fact she should know is, you're increasing spending and reducing services. That's the problem. Right through all of this budget document, it's increasing spending and reducing services, physiotherapy being one; they're working on drugs—you see, the trouble they have on the chemotherapy drugs as just one example.

So I'm cautious about this budget to the extent that I think underneath it, it's sort of like a submarine: We can see the little antenna above the water, and that's all this budget is, but below the water is a lot of debt, a lot of risk. It's the price of energy in Ontario; health care; the hospitals in my riding are now operating at—they used to get 7% a year; now they're getting 3% a year. It will only show up when they start laying off nurses.

I'm seeing it in almost every area. I read this morning in the paper that the extracurricular activities in most of the high schools are not taking place. A young athlete who was given a scholarship is not able to participate in a sport, which could jeopardize her getting a scholarship at a top university. There's so much in this budget that troubles me. You know, even in home care now, the biggest problem we have is they're going to put more money into home care but they're taking it out of the hospitals. It's a shell game from start to finish. There's no possible way I can support it, and I'm surprised the NDP is going to support this. They haven't read it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: Je suis désolé d'entendre que mon collègue de Durham indique qu'on n'a pas lu le budget. Certainement, on a pris le temps—on a pris notre rôle extrêmement au sérieux dans notre position comme adversaire au gouvernement pour vraiment apporter la nécessité et puis les besoins qui vont refléter les gens de nos communautés et à travers la province.

Oui, on a pris le temps de lire le budget; c'est une des responsabilités fondamentales qu'on a comme député pour représenter les gens de nos circonscriptions. Le message qu'on reçoit de nos circonscriptions est qu'ils

demandent beaucoup une accountability de ce gouvernement. Ils ont vu plusieurs scandales qui sont passés et puis plusieurs argents qui sont fait, plus ou moins, lancer dans toutes sortes de directions pour vraiment protéger des postes.

Puis, là maintenant, il y a des gens—des mamans des enfants qui sont seules à la maison; il y a des pères de famille qui travaillent à deux, trois emplois—qui cherchent une explication ou une justification : comment est-ce que le gouvernement peut garrocher de l'argent à tout partout à travers la province, mais ils ne peuvent pas nous donner ce que nous autres, on en a de besoin pour rendre notre vie, à travers la santé, un petit peu plus sûre; pour être capable d'aider nos aînés dans nos communautés, pour faire certain qu'ils ont besoin de cinq jours et puis la garantie de cinq jours pour que ma mère et mon père ou mon grand-père et puis ma grand-mère sont pris soin de à leur maison?

Ça fait que ça, c'est une affaire qu'on a regardée; puis oui, on l'a lu, le budget, monsieur le Président. On a aussi proposé à ce gouvernement d'imposer que l'ombudsman de l'Ontario peut regarder à ces services-là, à travers des services de santé, pour se rassurer et puis apporter quelque sorte de crédibilité en travers de notre système de santé, pour faire certain que les services qui sont dans le budget se rendent aux personnes qui en ont tellement besoin dans toutes nos communautés.

Monsieur le Président, je veux vous rassurer, on l'a lu, le budget. On a fait nos devoirs et on continue à travailler. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to follow the Minister of Children and Youth Services to speak about the bill. I was very disappointed to hear the comment of the member from Durham. I would challenge anyone to say that Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy is not adequate to support our young people.

The other piece is that I held a youth entrepreneurship workshop in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt two weeks ago. Every young person who attended the event across the city—even as far as from Durham and Mississauga came to my workshop—was commenting on Minister Hoskins' good work in the youth jobs strategy. I cannot believe any member of this House can say that \$295 million is not a good thing for Ontario young people.

Let me read to the member from Durham that the government of Ontario will be initiating the Ontario youth employment fund to the tune of \$195 million:

“—Ontario Youth Entrepreneurship Fund to support the next generation of entrepreneurs through mentorship, start-up capital and outreach,” to the tune of \$45 million over two years.

“—Ontario Youth Innovation Fund to support skills needed to lead and manage industrial research, development and commercialization, as well as support young entrepreneurs at universities and colleges.”

This is what innovation is all about. The last fund for Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy focus on youth:

"Business-Labour Connectivity and Training Fund to promote partnerships among business, labour, educators and youth to identify and solve" problems related to development issues.

So it is very rich for the member opposite to say this is not what Ontario young people want. I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, I challenge him to go across his region—across all of Durham—and say this is not appropriate to support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: You know, with this budget, we just see more of the same. It's the same old, same old. We're talking about scandal, mismanagement and waste. It's far from the first example that this government is unwilling to really take steps necessary to put Ontario back onto a better path.

This budget should have been used as an opportunity to really rein in spending, decrease the deficit, pay our debt down and get government across the aisle back in the place this province needs to be. Instead, the budget is being used to double down on spending and waste. We're seeing spending increase at a time when even your own economist, Don Drummond, said you need to take action now, and then you actually tout that you've done 60% of it.

Hey, you can't jump a canyon in two leaps; you need to do it in one big leap. You can't do it in half measures; you need to do it in one big, solid step that shows you have a commitment to this province and the people who pay the taxes. It's not your money; it's our money. It's all of our money, and we're here to represent that.

It should come as no surprise to those of us who have been doing our jobs holding this government accountable that they've got an awful lot to account for. It starts with the Liberal seat-saving plan—the gas plants, right? That's what really is the confidence motion we should be talking about here. That's what people really want to vote on. That's what is in the front of people's minds, not a pretend budget that does nothing to solve the province's problems. It's window dressing, just like just about every other piece of legislation we've seen come out of this government in the past couple of years.

Why don't you actually sit down and think about something that will really get this province back on its feet, instead of putting window dressing all over everything, putting pretty names to your bills and making sure you go out and market that? You know what? People are sick of that. They see through it. They want change. They want a government that's actually going to stand up and do what's right for Ontarians, listen to them and actually take bold action that's going to get this province back in shape, not pretty words and pretty bills.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Children and Youth Services, you have two minutes for a response.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their responses to my comments with respect to the budget bill that we're debating here today.

There were a number of things that I'm quite proud are in this budget that I wasn't able to speak to in the 10 minutes that I had. We're talking about \$42 million to help adults with developmental disabilities. We're talking about transforming social assistance and social policy. We're looking at continuing along the way to eliminate the deficit in time. We have the lowest per capita public service across the country, Speaker. There's an increase in community care, with increased support to rural communities. We're creating opportunities.

When I'm in Windsor, when I'm speaking to the staff from my constituency office, and I say, "What are the calls we're getting? What are people interested in?" Speaker, they're looking for help, they're looking for support, and that's what this is providing them.

We're looking at a balance between ensuring our economy stays strong, which we're doing with respect to our investments and our support of business, and investing in our citizens and in the people of Ontario, which I truly believe in. We hear the party opposite, the opposition, say we shouldn't be making these investments, that we need to just focus on the budget. Well, as I said when I started my comments, public policy is not an either/or predicament. It's one where we have to look at both sides and ensure that we have balance in terms of what we're investing in our communities and where we can make some changes to transform how we provide those public services. That's what we're working along, and that is what we will continue to do.

Speaker, as well, if I look back at the past in my riding of Windsor West, in terms of investments that have been made over the last number of years by this government in my riding, if those investments had not been made, I shudder at what that community would look like.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to ask you a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The Minister of the Environment is going to advocate on my behalf, and I appreciate that.

I'm privileged to stand today as the MPP for Sarnia—Lambton to speak to the 2013 budget motion. I'd like to say up front that I will not be supporting this budget motion.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I know that's disappointing for a number of people on the other side, but I thought I might as well be up front and clear right off the start.

Too many hard-working folks in Ontario and in Lambton in particular are having trouble finding work in this province, and this government has presented a budget that, unfortunately, provides no hope for them.

When we as MPPs stand in this House to debate the budget, we need to make sure that we are representing the interests of the people of our community. Unfortunately, the policies of this government for the last decade have done little for Sarnia—Lambton. This budget is more of the same.

This is a no-hope budget for the people of Sarnia-Lambton who have been looking for work since the good-paying manufacturing jobs have left our community due to skyrocketing green energy prices. This is a no-hope budget for the people who lost their job when this government took a hatchet to the horse breeding and horse racing industry. This is a no-hope budget for people who will lose their jobs when the Sarnia Jail, one of the best-run jails in the province, is closed, and millions in income and indirect spending will be shifted from Sarnia to the Liberal riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. This is a no-hope budget for the people who will lose their job at the Lambton Generating Station when it is closed at the end of the year—closed despite the fact that every energy expert in Ontario knows that the Lambton Generating Station is a prime candidate for conversion and is desperately needed to support the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals' addiction to unreliable industrial wind turbines.

Despite the wishes of the Premier and the leader of the NDP, the people of Sarnia-Lambton know we can't waste another year or two talking about problems while they sit on their hands. This is not my opinion alone. My constituents in Sarnia-Lambton have been overwhelmingly in favour of voting down this budget. In fact, I asked my staff to find me any letters from constituents asking that, as the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, I vote in favour of the 2013 Liberal-NDP budget. Mr. Speaker, there were none. What they did find were emails like this from Mr. Chuck Matton of Lambton Shores. It reads:

"The wind energy situation is completely out of hand!

"We have lost \$2 billion over the last six years for our hydro dealings with the States and Quebec. And we pay the highest rates in North America. Why?

"Again, mismanagement. The only thing green about any of this is the money being wasted.

"The NDP won't bring down the Liberals because, in my opinion, Ms. Horwath is so unsure of her party's chances in an election and subsequently losing her seat.

"She talks a good plan at times but always fails to press the Liberals on anything or really try to make a change. Too comfortable, I guess.

"The dice have been rolled and action must begin...."

Mr. Speaker, this is just one example of the tone of the emails my office has received since the Liberals and the NDP began negotiations to keep Premier Wynne and her Liberal henchmen in power.

Here is another. I want to read this into the record because it is important that the people in this chamber are aware of what the people out on Main Street are saying.

This email is from Mr. Rick Hornblower. It reads:

"Well, Bob, almost two years.

"Still not sure about my alliances.

"What I do know is that the Liberals must go.

"My belief at this hour is that the NDP will support the present government.

"As much as the people of this province have had enough of the Liberals, I believe that those like yourself

have to step up the commentary. You need to convince the NDP, and speak out against them in the Legislature.

"As the opposition critic [for corrections] ... you need to take the minister to task on her mismanagement at the London detention centre.

"Make it personal. It is her ministry." There's quite a bit more.

"You can quote me in the Legislature, but it seems most evident that in London, the detention centre is being run for the most part by the inmates.

"Additionally, your party cannot give up on pressing the health minister, given all" of the outstanding issues on eHealth and Ornge.

"And do not forget the energy minister and Premier in all of this.

"Relentless pressure, the same kind of pressure and disclosure that sent McGuinty, Bentley and Duncan running away and hiding."

Mr. Hornblower and Mr. Matton's frustration with the inaction by the Liberals and NDP is evident. These are the sorts of emails that are common in my office. They are common because people in my community see nothing in this budget that will address their top concern: building the economy in a way that people have the opportunity to work in good jobs and earn good wages. Instead, the Liberal Party has committed the province to another year of no action in the budget, as they promised to "keep studying plans to build the economy."

There is absolutely no plan to entice corporations or businesses to come to Ontario and to do better. That is a major concern for the residents of Sarnia-Lambton because, as a border community, the residents in my community understand how necessary it is to be competitive for business with our neighbour to the south. They understand that we are in constant competition with the US in order to land the big investments and new jobs.

To highlight this issue and shed some light on the concern that people in my community have with this budget, I want to share an article from First Monday, which is a business magazine printed in Sarnia-Lambton. The article is by a man that Mr. Bradley, the Minister of the Environment, might know from the past: Mr. Chris Cooke. It's entitled, "146.5 Million Reasons Not to Invest Here." It reads:

"It was a small story tucked away in a corner of the business section of the Globe and Mail." This is from the article in First Monday.

"Toyota will build its next-generation Lexus not in Cambridge or Woodstock but in Georgetown, Kentucky. Even the largest car company in the world is shunning Ontario, the most expensive place in North America to manufacture anything. The ES350 will be built in the deep southern United States, where power costs are a small fraction of what they are here and where job-hungry state and municipal governments walk on water to attract auto investment and jobs.

"Unlike Ontario, the state of Kentucky is offering Toyota \$146.5 million in incentives to build cars there.

"Kathleen Wynne doesn't get it.

"She and former Premier Dalton McGuinty destroyed manufacturing in Ontario by blighting the province with wind turbines and uncompetitive energy costs. She's closing" down "Lambton Generating Station by the end of the year.

"She's replacing a perfectly good power source with" a "half-billion dollars' worth of gas generation less than a kilometre away."

"Wynne could convert Lambton Generating for a fraction of the cost. Instead of creating jobs, she's destroying them. Three hundred will be unemployed at Courtright by Christmas.

"She's out of control and the largest auto manufacturer in the world knows it.

"Toyota is ignoring a provincial government that is out of touch with reality.

"Unlike Wynne, Toyota knows it must build cars people want in a competitive marketplace, and Ontario is anything but" that.

"Power costs are too high. Labour costs are too high.

"Taxes are too high. And there are too many bureaucrats pushing around too much paper.

"Kathleen Wynne, or, as Brian Keelan calls her"—another commentator in that paper—"Kathleen McWynnty, is allowing wind turbines to be built next to million-dollar homes along Lakeshore Road in Plympton-Wyoming.

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"Everywhere we go in Ontario we can see the power but we just can't afford it. Toyota can see that too and must surely be asking the same question." I won't say what the next line was; it wouldn't be parliamentary. Again, that was an article by Mr. Chris Cooke, editor of First Monday, a publication in Sarnia.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset of my remarks, I will not be voting for this budget because as the elected member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia-Lambton I need to represent the opinions of the people of my community in this chamber. I might add, just to go back over that: the affront on the harness racing industry in the past, Lambton Generating Station, the Sarnia Jail—and that's just a number I can think of off the top of my head.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I had some help from the Minister of Rural Affairs; I'll pay him credit for that. Just as recently as April-May, he and I met, and I think we got some results there. It's unfortunate that people were put through that, though, for the last year. I will say that.

The people of Sarnia-Lambton want change in government. They want a government that will be courageous in its leadership. They also want a government that will not hide or ignore the problems of today, as this Liberal budget instructs us to do.

In conclusion, I would like to add that it's been an opportunity and a privilege to stand here today to debate the budget. We did read the budget. I spent some time in the lockup. I know members in my party spent the whole day in there; we spent a lot of time in there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're still voting no.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, we're still voting no, as the Minister of the Environment said.

We had to weigh it all, and at the end of the day we had to do what's right by my riding; other members can speak for their ridings.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, unlike my colleagues in the NDP, I cannot support this budget or this government, in good conscience. As we've said all along, it's not so much about the budget; it's about this government in particular. It's not about numbers; it's about this government. We think they're past their best-before time, and we can't possibly support them; I can't possibly support them, as the member for Sarnia-Lambton. My residents are asking for change at Queen's Park, and I am as well.

At this point, I will thank you for your indulgence and listen to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to stand here and talk about the budget and respond to some of the comments from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. He talked about his own riding. That's a good thing; that's what we're all here to do.

He talked about the comments of people from his own riding. The comments he's getting and the comments that I'm getting in my office are quite frankly different. Not everyone in my office is saying they support the Liberals, because quite frankly, in northern Ontario most people don't trust the government because of the scandals. So I have people saying, "Bring down the government." I also have people saying, "Make government work." So I have a hard time believing that there is a universal—not one person in Sarnia-Lambton wants government to work. I have a hard time agreeing with the member on that one, because, you know what? There are various opinions across the province.

A lot of people comment to me, and it's easy to say, "Oh, the Conservatives don't read the budget." That's not the real problem. With the people who comment to me, the problem is that they said, even before there was any discussion, "We're going to vote against." The business people in my riding—a lot of them tend to be Conservative—shake their heads and say, "What kind of response is that? You never, ever say no or walk away from something before it has even been presented." That's what a lot of the Conservative-minded people in my riding have a hard time buying. That's why we are still looking at this and why the one thing that we're going to need is accountability, because that's the one thing that no one is buying from this government. We need much stronger accountability measures.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm always hopeful, Mr. Speaker. I was hopeful the member for Sarnia-Lambton would be positive in his response. I know they get their notes. They're called talking points. The whiz kids—

Interjection: You get them too.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't read mine, though.

The whiz kids in the back room prepare the talking points, and members just get up and use them. Now, there were several quotes he had, or emails, that sounded as though they were coming from the Conservative executive, so they had a meeting and they decided they would send all these emails.

The fact is, it's a pretty balanced approach in this budget, and I think most people I've talked to out there—some like some portions of the budget; some say, "I would have preferred something else here or there," but by and large, they've said that it seems to be a reasonable budget that the province can work with.

I recall that from 1977 to 1981, we were in a minority Parliament that worked exceedingly well. Why? The government was responsive to the opposition, and the opposition tended to be responsible. Therefore, it lasted four complete years. Did the government put a little water in its wine? Yes, it had to. Let's hope there's wine after tomorrow to put water in. But the government did that, and the opposition had to tone down a bit in its approach.

We're looking at a budget that has a lot of positive components to grow the economy, to deal with those who have major challenges in these economic times, and at the same time to bring down the deficit in a period of time that's not going to push us back into recession.

I'm looking at my friend from Beaches–East York. He would have been delighted when he saw that the Trillium benefit now can be received either in a lump sum or in individual payments. That's just one part of the budget that has responded to people of Ontario. So I was deeply disappointed that my friend from Sarnia–Lambton was not really enthusiastic about a great budget.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I was intently listening to the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and I certainly agree with many of his comments. I have heard some members of the government wishing that we would speak positively about this budget. Well, I can give you some positive terms. The budget is positively awful; that's exactly what it is. It doesn't decrease spending. It's mind-boggling to me why a government cannot find ways to run this province without spending more money all the time, and that's what we see in this budget.

As far as saying that we would support the budget, of course we wouldn't support this budget, because you look back over the past nine years or so at the record of this government, and why would you support this government? All members on the opposition side, including the third party, have seen what a horrible record and the waste and the spending scandals that this government has been involved with. So why would we prop up a government like this? We certainly wouldn't. As has been proven correct, the spending is continuing at a rate that we just can't afford. That certainly was brought out in the budget that we received last week. That's why we don't support this. We can't support this.

People in my riding have been asking me more and more, and it certainly isn't an onslaught of people—I can agree with the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on that; not everybody wants an election—but it's getting more and more that I'm being asked, "When are you going to pull the plug on these guys?" Certainly I think that the time has come to put this government out of its misery and get on with an election.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Sarnia–Lambton and, as well, to his colleague from Perth–Wellington who just spoke and reiterated many of the same points. It's quite clear that they are convinced that this government has created a great many sinful acts, and I think there are many Ontarians who would agree with them that the government has done a lot of wrong things in the last couple of years. We recognize, in the New Democratic Party, that there is much unease out there about gas plants, about Ornge, about eHealth, about 100 other things that have gone wrong for this government. But I have to tell you, the reality of this situation is that the people have sent us here, all of us here, to make this province work. They, in their wisdom, determined that this would be a minority Parliament, and we have an obligation from each and every one of the three parties represented here to make them whole, to make what they wanted work.

The easiest course, and the one I think my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton and the Conservative Party have chosen, is just to say no and force an election. That's the traditional role of an opposition party in a majority government.

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The hardest course is to try to make this Legislature work and to improve the lives of ordinary Ontarians. We, in this party, have tried, and we are still trying to do that. We are doing that because we believe that the people out there, the majority of them, want to see this Legislature work. They do not want an election at this time, they do not want the scandals to continue from that side, but by and large, most of the responses we're getting are that people are positive towards the budget itself.

We await Ms. Wynne's decision on where the Liberal Party is going to go with our suggestions, and that's the way it should be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Sarnia–Lambton, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to reply to my colleagues from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of the Environment, the member from Perth–Wellington and, of course, our colleague from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Speaker, recent polls—I mean, we all know what the pollsters—

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, but who knows what they're good for?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, who knows what polls are good for? One that was a couple of weeks ago said that

over 66% of the people in Ontario wanted a change in government; they wanted a change in direction. They were fed up.

Mr. Michael Prue: How many wanted an election?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't know how many wanted an election. I don't remember those numbers now. But like I say, polls are suspect now. I think the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker had a quote many, many years ago, which I won't use here, but he said what polls were good for; he said that dogs knew what polls were good for. That's being held more and more true as time goes on. I think it's the pollsters—I'll probably get myself in trouble with a number of them; I know a number of them. But I think their tactics and their methods certainly seem suspect anymore.

Anyway, it's good; I'm glad I had the opportunity today to hear comments from my colleagues and had an opportunity to speak about the issues in Sarnia-Lambton, and they are many. I want to be able to go back home on this weekend—we're on the parliamentary break, and life wouldn't be very comfortable for me if I went back and said that I was supporting this government, because that's not what I'm hearing at home. It would be very uncomfortable, I can tell you right now. The people who vote for me and even those who haven't made their minds up have already made their minds up on both this government and this budget, and a number of the scandals that I won't go into at this time; they are certainly legion. If I was trying to list them—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Bob, are you going to the races at Hiawatha?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hope to be able to go to the races at Hiawatha, definitely.

I just would like to sum up with an old quote: It's not that they know so little; it's that they know so much that isn't true.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with great honour that I rise this morning to offer my comments on behalf of the constituents of Algoma-Manitoulin. What is most important about this bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 65, the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act, is what it means for the people of Ontario. At the end of the day, Ontarians have made it clear that they do not want any more scandals or wasted money. They want their elected officials to do what they were elected to do and get results that would make life more affordable, improve health care and create jobs.

We have heard from thousands of Ontarians, and it is their voice we expect represented in this budget. Ontarians demand accountability and they deserve to have it as well.

There are a number of measures in this bill that will not work for Ontarians. This act attempts to look as though it is working for Ontarians by reducing auto insurance, but when you look at the fine print, it's just a weak attempt at doing so. The act establishes an industry-wide target for a 15% reduction in premiums that insurers are permitted to charge in the private passenger auto-

mobile category. That sounds great, Mr. Speaker, and a tad familiar, but the problem is, it is only a target. A target does not mean action. Setting targets is promoting trying, instead of demanding positive change.

FSCO gets an extended mandate to investigate the billing practices of these med rehab clinics and auto body shops, and a process of FSCO sanctions leading to the revocation of licences is laid out if a provider commits fraud. This is a step in the right direction when it comes to accountability. Insurance companies, auto body shops and health clinics all have a role to play and a part in the prevention of fraud. There is no doubt that fraud leads to greater costs when it comes to auto insurance—but if these anti-fraud measures do translate to consumer savings and not just increased profits for the insurance sector.

There is no mention of a review of the neighbourhood discrimination issue. This means that, depending on where you live, no matter your driving record, you will be legally allowed to be treated differently. This is unfair and a practice that the government is well aware of. Ontarians want to see this practice ended, yet all they are left with is another missed opportunity.

We want to bring accountability to this budget on behalf of Ontarians and have already announced a series of proposals that will enhance accountability measures going forward.

It is extremely difficult for people in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin to understand how the government could squander millions on eHealth, Ornge, and now the gas plants while the north remains underserved in many areas.

I have raised the plight in the Legislature before of a constituent from Chapleau who must travel to Timmins for dialysis three times a week and has experienced long delays with the Northern Health Travel Grant, something that this government had committed to repair in a previous budget. We still are waiting.

It is difficult to understand how billions can be wasted while some northerners are forced into debt seeking medical care they desperately need. It is also difficult to comprehend that the government can throw money away on scandals but cannot spare money to fix the poorly managed northern transportation network. Northerners cannot rely on taking the cancelled ONTC train and must instead rely on driving on underserved roads in northern Ontario. These roads are often closed because of a private contract which has left these roads extremely dangerous to drive on in winter conditions. Now, in the spring, due to blocked culverts and water that is blocking these roads, we can't get to places of work.

Algoma-Manitoulin communities deserve accountability. They deserve to know that every tax dollar is going toward programs and services that will benefit this province and their communities as well. They expect this government to learn from its mistakes and have accountability and transparency issues built right into government policies.

New Democrats are proposing that Ontario's Ombudsman have oversight over the health care system. This

would start to rebuild the trust which has been broken through scandals and the failure to provide Ontarians clear guarantees in the health care system. Ontarians told us that they want concrete changes in health care, and they know better than to just allow the government to keep saying, "Just trust us; we'll deliver." Families have seen their faith in this health care shaken by chemotherapy underdosing, scandals at Ornge air ambulance, and the government's failure to guarantee home care wait times. Asking Ontario's Ombudsman to have oversight into the health care sector is a fair and reasonable way to start building trust.

New Democrats have also proposed to create a financial accountability office that would track government spending. This financial accountability office would be modelled after the parliamentary budget office at the federal level. It would examine the government's annual budget and provide fiscal updates for accuracy, something we desperately need.

New Democrats have called on the government to close corporate tax loopholes. This is a no-nonsense policy that would create government revenue to spend on programs that help all Ontarians. Instead, new corporate tax loopholes are set to come into effect in 2015 and would allow corporations to write off the HST on entertainment and meals, something that northern Ontarians cannot fathom to understand—why we continue to do those things. This again frustrates Ontario families. The government wastes money on scandals and cuts programs and services and then goes so far as rewarding some of the highest earners and leaving open tax loopholes.

This budget also falls extremely short when it comes to promises on home care. This government sets a five-day target instead of a guarantee. We should strive to do better, not strive to try to do better. We need commitment to eliminate the 61,000-person wait-list for home care. We need to cap CEO salaries and find executive savings in the health care sector so that we can make guarantees and give our seniors the care they deserve in their homes at the time they need it.

This government brags about creating strategies, but besides adding a youth job program that we, the NDP, originally proposed, there is no program mentioned that will actually tackle the province's 7.7% overall unemployment rate. This rate can be even higher for northern communities, and we need programs that create incentives to invest and hire in the north.

There are real issues that Ontarians want to see solutions for. This budget is troublesome because it does little to address challenges faced by northern Ontario. There is barely even any mention of the north in this budget.

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There is no talk of an infrastructure plan for the Ring of Fire. It is very unlikely that this project will move ahead and boost the northern economy while the government continues to ignore its challenges.

The government continues to divest ONTC while talking about a pan-northern transportation system. This shows that the government does not understand northern

Ontario, because the ONTC is an important part of the northern Ontario transportation plan.

The budget announces the extension of the northern electricity rate program, investing \$360 million over the next three years, but we need to have this program extended to medium-sized energy consumers. These consumers need to have a break in order to grow in the north so that they can develop their businesses and attract more to northern Ontario.

The government committed to working with stakeholders on the review of the mining tax, but there has been no announcement on progress of this review that was first initiated last budget. Ontario has one of the lowest mining taxes, and we need to ensure that communities are realizing the full benefit of hosting these mines.

There are valuable services that the north has lost, which are having serious repercussions on our local communities. There are no mentions of addressing these issues in the budget. The government refuses to reverse its decisions to cut ServiceOntario offices. Northerners who rely on these counters in Manitouwadge, Wawa, Chapleau and along the North Shore of Manitoulin Island have had their hours of service cut in half.

These cuts have had a negative impact on local businesses and local economies, as well as employees who have experienced reduced hours and the loss of jobs. Businesses who rely on ServiceOntario to process transactions have to wait until these kiosks are open to do their business. This is a drag on the local economy.

It is clear that this budget has a way to go to work for Ontarians, and especially northern Ontario. Accountability continues to be a top concern, and we need to have a real effort to bring accountability efforts in. The budget will need to include measures that work for Ontarians in order for Ontarians and individuals in Algoma-Manitoulin to once again support this government.

We've set out very precise demands that we've been asking for in these discussions that we've been having in regard to the budget. I'm very proud of what our leader, Andrea Horwath, has done. I'm very proud of standing here with my colleagues, along with the NDP, doing the work that needs to be done.

It's quite unfortunate that I look across the way to my colleagues in the Conservative caucus who chose the easy way out. I can assure you: When I'm talking to my municipal leaders and my communities, I hear a mixed message, but the one message that I consistently hear every single time—actually, from card-carrying Conservative members—is, "Why didn't they at least read the budget?"

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my comments there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his remarks today. I couldn't help but pick up my remarks from where he ended by saying that, certainly, the New Democratic Party and the Liberal government don't see eye to eye on everything.

This is an opposition/government relationship but, at the same time, I do give a lot of credit to the NDP for coming forward with ideas and coming forward with proposals for the budget, rolling up their sleeves and working, as I believe most Ontarians want this minority government to work.

As I say, I pick up on his closing comments about the fact that the Progressive Conservative Party have basically been missing in action when it comes to the budget. I gave a media interview recently where I pointed out that when I talk to many people about my role as House leader, they say "Oh, it must be very exciting in a minority government. It must be deal-making and sitting down and"—as I say—"rolling up your sleeves"—and, as I joked in the paper—"ordering Chinese food and working late into the night to say, 'We don't like this clause, and if you could fix this schedule or if you could do this, we'll let it pass. If you allow this bill to go this way, we'll support you here in committee.'"

I think they're always disappointed when I say, "Well, no, it actually doesn't work that way." I thought it was going to work that way, but instead, we have an official opposition which has just checked out, an official opposition which showed up and basically said, "We don't care what's in the budget." We joked that we could have taken Changebook and put it in the budget, and they would have said, "We're going to vote against it. We do not want to make this minority government work."

I feel that that's very sad. It's a sad commentary on the message that I think Ontarians will pick up—I think, a point another member made—a message that Ontarians sent to us, which is that it's a minority government and we've got to work together. So I congratulate the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for raising that point. I congratulate the NDP for sitting down and trying to work through things. Let's hope that we can find a deal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate commenting on the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. A couple of things he had mentioned—I'm sure there's probably very few in this Legislature that know about Sultan Road, which he's talking about. If he knows the history very well, as I do, about Sultan Road, there are certainly a lot of impacts on there. Some of the other things are that when you talk about the mining rates, let's find out which rate you're talking about, because look what happened to De Beers at Attawapiskat. If you know what De Beers did in this Legislature, you would certainly think differently about the rates on mining and how it's impacting. We need to look at all those things.

In regard to the Minister of the Environment, who spoke earlier, where he stated about some of the aspects: When is it that an opposition has actually supported a budget? Tell us when and show us all the details that we can go into—the official opposition, not a third party. If you go into the details now—

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, but at least they read it.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Read it, yes. Let's talk about page 31, when it talks about the revenue tax on there be-

cause, actually, I did read the budget. One of the concerns was that, "New revenue tools should enable choice among different transportations available while encouraging the use of public transit." Is that a reference to a 10-cent-a-litre transit tax in order to support Toronto? A lot of individuals in Oshawa do not want that.

Let's go to page 35. In the time I have, I want to make some comments about page 35, where it talks about extending the 407, the 35/115, but there isn't a timeline there. As mentioned here, it talks about a significant component of the things that are happening there. We want to make sure. I'd love to have the time to debate that because I have a lot of answers for that specific issue.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Speaker. If we go on to page 208 of the budget, because I did read the budget, it specifically talks—people need to realize it—about a \$3.6-billion spending increase. You want to look at what's happening in here. You have to realize the whole budget, do an analysis of everything that goes on and understand what the words in there mean in this particular one—pages 31 to 35—significantly. We need to talk about the mining tax, which the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was speaking about. There are a lot of other issues that I hope to get to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm pleased to stand up here and talk about the budget for the members of my riding, London—Fanshawe. I was pleased to hear some of the actual comments from the member from the Conservative Party, because he talked about what was wrong with the budget. He talked about some of the things we've been saying, because there are no targets—or, excuse me, there are no guarantees. This budget has targets for things, and we are asking for guarantees. Just because you don't like something in the budget—you should give feedback on what you want to see in the budget. But the Conservatives have said, "We're just going to vote it down."

New Democrats have been very respectful and thoughtful of this process and considerate of the voices of Ontarians and the people that we represent. We see that this government says that they want a target for five-day home care visits. We are saying that that's not good enough. The people of Ontario want to hold you accountable to things that you're promising. So we're looking for guarantees and we're asking this government to take our considerations very seriously before we decide on this budget.

The member mentioned about transit and how it's going to be paid for. Well, again, we're saying that you guys are offering that we're going to have a transit system. You say it's going to cost—independently, we've heard \$300 million, but we want to make sure we hold you to that and make you accountable because we know that with the Presto transit project—you started off, I

think it was at around \$25 million, was it—somewhere around there? It's now up to \$700 million.

That is not how the people of Ontario want to see a budget. They want to make sure that if you say you're going to spend something and you forecast that money, that's the amount. You've done the homework to make sure that's what it costs. They don't want fiascos that are going to cost three or four times more than what this Liberal government says in their budget.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to respond to the debate by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. I'm just looking through page 62 of the budget. That's the north—I hear that from the member from Thunder Bay often, advocating for the north. People have heard me advocating for Orléans in the Ottawa area. I think it's important that those issues—the low lake water that has a big impact on this member's riding and the docking of the ferry: Those things are so important and those things have to be looked at in the budget.

So I look at “Strong Northern Communities” on page 62, and it talks about the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. It talks about the government “investing \$360 million over the next three years through the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate ... Program.” He mentioned that. He just wants to see that continued longer-term, I believe.

“The Ontario Power Authority's Industrial Electricity Incentive ... program offers a reduced electricity rate on new and expanded production....”

“The government is making significant infrastructure investments to strengthen northern communities. For example, it is building a new Thunder Bay Consolidated Courthouse, expected to be completed,” and the Atikokan General Hospital.

“In 2013, the province is providing northern municipalities with \$339 million in support through the combined benefit of the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund ... and provincial uploads, an increase of \$86 million over the previous program.

“Government support for northern school boards” is a 72% increase since 2002–03.

“The Northern Ontario School of Medicine has graduated a total of 220 new doctors since the spring of 2009.”

So there are all kinds of good things happening in the north, but there always, always has to be that drive to get more for the northern communities who contribute so much to our economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to touch on the member for Ottawa-Orléans. You're absolutely right: We always have to fight when we're representing the north. It seems that we're always left on the back burner, and we have to scratch and fight and bite for every single piece that we can get for northern Ontario. I can assure you, you will hear nothing less from me from this side of the House.

I want to also thank the Minister of Government Services for his comments that he brought to the discussion.

The member from Oshawa: You're absolutely right when it comes to the mining tax. Yeah, we have to think about it, but that's all that's been happening over the last couple of years with this government. We keep thinking about it, but we're not implementing; we're not doing anything. We need to sit down to really discuss how we're going to make this a benefit so that some of the municipalities and some of the communities that are providing good opportunities to these mining corporations benefit as well from it. So we need to discuss it, but we also need to take action upon it and stop talking about it.

My colleague here from London-Fanshawe really touched on what my whole message was about, really bringing an accountability measure and making sure that Ontarians have the faith and the trust, and we can re-establish some type of credibility into our government. For far too long, we've seen wasteful spending, unaccountable governments that they are frustrated with. They are beyond their minds as to what is happening with where this province is going.

They are happy with some of the announcements, which are very reflective of some of the demands that we have put forward. That's my role. That's what they've asked me to come to Queen's Park to do, to bring their needs and their wants to the table so that it can be reflected in the policies that this government is looking at moving forward. What they are now asking for, and what they are demanding, is that this government is accountable to delivering those programs to them, to their communities and to their municipalities back home.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Legislature to welcome the students from grades 10 and 11 at the Oxford Reformed Christian School from the city of Mount Elgin. The students have also brought with them some chaperones and teachers: Jake and Jacqui Van Meppelen-Scheppink, Lisa Groeneweg and Johann VanIttersum. We want to welcome them here to Queen's Park, and I hope they enjoy their day. They experienced one of the great experiences of Toronto—they got caught in traffic coming in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Actually, Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to wear these beautiful carnations that were given to us by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who are having a day at Queen's Park today. I would ask for unanimous consent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was told that was coming after introductions, but now that you've done it, let's do it.

Do we have unanimous consent to wear the carnations? Agreed? Agreed.

Introduction of guests?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce the interns in my office, Mackenzie Radan and Mariam Balika. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature, and we all hope you enjoy your time here. They're in the west lobby, Speaker.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Taylor Workman, an officer with the Royal Canadian Navy, from London West, and Cassie Andrew, a third-year wildlife biology and conservation management student at the University of Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome four guests who are here in the gallery today to support my private member's resolution this afternoon: Miss Judy Mead, Mr. Brendan Pooran, Ms. Dawn Roper and Mr. Gordon Kyle from Community Living Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I'd like to introduce the family of one of my favourite pages here, Chedi Mbaga. The mother is here, Leila Mbaga—where are they now?—and brother Jerome Mbaga—

Interjection: There they are.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There they are: brother Jerome Mbaga, sister Mariama Mbaga, sister Naila Mbaga, brother Kisenge Mbaga, and friend Robert Lowenstein. Welcome. Good to have you here.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: With your permission, I'd like to say goodbye not to only all the pages who will be leaving us tomorrow but, in particular, Mr. Simon Osak from the noble institution from Upper Canada College, which I share.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce a class from Maranatha Christian Day School in Drayton and their teacher Laverne Good. They're just starting to filter in on other side there. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess I did that a little bit in reverse order, but I would like to introduce some guests who have come down to participate in the MS Society Day at Queen's Park. They are Laurel Ireland, who is the daughter of a good friend of mine; Rona Ramsey; also, Mr. Yves Savoie, who's the executive director for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada; and Cathy Topping, who came to see me with her caregiver Marg. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to introduce a couple of interns at the Ministry of Education this summer who are sitting in the east members' gallery: Paulina O'Neill and Natasha Milne. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from—the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Who are you recognizing?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Okay. Actually, Mr. Speaker, I stand as the Minister of Government Services to intro-

duce interns from my office: Azeem Patel, Zain Haq and Benjamin Atkins.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, just coming into the gallery up there are students from the Crawford Adventist Academy, an academy that's in my riding. I just wanted to welcome them, as I just did downstairs a few minutes ago.

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to introduce—I don't believe they've quite made it here yet—Elizabeth and Siegfried Kiessling, who are down at Queen's Park today for lunch with their MPP. They were successful bidders at an auction in support of Christine's Place. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Sudbury and page Megan, aunt Anne-Louise Sabo, uncle John Sabo, uncle Jerry Tonello and cousin Zachary Tonello are here to visit Megan. Welcome, and thank you for joining us.

In the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to introduce some lifelong friends of mine from the riding of Brant. Three of them are retired; the other one's coming close to retirement. They're lifelong friends of mine: Dom DiBartolomeo, Mike Rafferty, Bill Chopp and Bill O'Neill. We're glad you're here with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. I find it remarkable that this government, which claims to be so open and transparent, can continue to pull the wool over Ontarians' eyes. Yesterday, the Premier met with the leader of the third party. It would seem to me that they are simply planning their next move, at Ontario's peril. The NDP were handed seven of their demands in this pathetic excuse for a budget, and they're asking for more. While the leader of the third party stands here one day claiming she has lost confidence in this government's accountability, the next day she is meeting with the Premier in a bid to keep them in power and the NDP at the table. Well, a pox on both your houses. Ontario needs a change. We need real action and an immediate stop to these charades and delusions of grandeur.

Would the Deputy Premier please tell us: Did your Premier take the Lexus lane to meet with the leader of the third party to throw future Ontario jobs under the bus?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think what this province needs is a budget. I think we need a budget to be passed in the House, and that's what we all should be talking about. You know, there's a lot at stake. This isn't a political game, Speaker; this is about real people who are waiting to know whether or not this budget is going to be passed. So let's talk about who's watching very, very carefully. Maybe the 30,000 young people who are going to benefit from the youth job strategy—they're watching

very carefully to see whether this Legislature will pass the budget that will get them the jobs that they need. How about the low-income families who are waiting to see whether we collectively will pass a budget that will increase the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Before I go to the supplementary, the member from Cambridge will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I should have expected that kind of public relations messaging coming from a party with an unelected Premier. It seems to me that the only thing they can do right is to spin and shift focus away from their failed record. Well, spin this: Out of all of the provinces, Ontario has the highest level of provincial debt—\$273 billion. Ontario has lost—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, don't use the opportunity when it gets quiet to talk.

Finish the question, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ontario has lost 58,000 private sector jobs in March alone. Here's the spin for the Liberal comms office: You cannot spend more money than you're taking in and still hope to balance the books. Taking advice from a party that is infamous for Rae days is not only poor strategy, but also compromises the future of the province. Credit rating agencies have already downgraded Ontario. Deputy Premier, how can you stand here and tell Ontarians your government is being transparent, or does the NDP have to make another ask for that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As you can imagine, there are a lot of people talking about what this budget means for them. I think the member opposite might not care about the people on social assistance who are very, very excited about the opportunity to keep more of the money that they earn, but I bet he will care about what Ian Howcroft, the vice-president of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, has to say about this budget. He says, "We are pleased to see the government formally recognize the importance of manufacturing to the province's economy.... Overall, this budget is a good signal that the province wants to work closer with industry."

This is a budget that has widespread support. It's time to get this budget passed.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The Deputy Premier should be mortified that this is the hope that has been offered to Ontario families. Ontarians deserve more. Ontarians deserve a government with a Premier of their choosing, which yours is not. Ontarians deserve transparency. Secretly meeting with the leader of the third party in back-room talks does not instill confidence, in me or in the rest of Ontario, that your Premier actually wants transparency.

The time for talk has ended; now is the time for action. Only Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus have shown

clear and principled leadership to bring Ontario back to the top in places to live, economic performance and opportunity. The leader of the third party has made a deal with the devil.

Deputy Premier, does your caucus actually believe in its own budget—

Interjections.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Speaker, "the devil" is unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke North will resist, because I want him to go to his seat so I can tell him to stop.

Borderline. I remind you to stay away from that kind of language, please.

Finish. You have—wrap up.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll just put the question, Speaker.

Deputy Premier, does your caucus actually believe in its own budget, or is the leader from the third party giving you a pill that's just too tough to swallow?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You know, the member opposite raises the question of a democratically elected leader. I think he might also take a moment to think about what the people of Ontario sent to the Legislature the last time we went to the polls. They sent a minority government. They want us to make minority government work.

That's exactly what we're doing. This budget contains essential Liberal values. It also contains elements that are common ground with your party, with the third party. But over and above everything else, this is a budget that the people of Ontario want and are anxious for it to be passed.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Deputy Premier. This week at the justice committee, we heard the Liberal political interference drove up the cost of your gas plant scandal. Michael Killeavy of the OPA told us the energy minister's chief of staff instructed them to put a richer counter-offer to give the Oakville proponent more money. This morning, John Kelly of the Attorney General's ministry told us the province had no obligation to pay damages for the full value of the contract, yet the Premier's office clearly instructed the OPA to do so.

The Premier signed off on the 2011 deal that kicked off this drive of costs in Oakville. Her signature was on that document. Deputy, why won't any of you admit when you knew it was more than \$40 million?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think the member should review Hansard of what Mr. Kelly told the committee this morning. Let me share some quotes with him.

This is what he said on the idea of the issue of negotiating by the Premier's office. He said, and this is John Kelly, counsel to the Ministry of the Attorney General:

"To be fair to them"—by that he means Mr. Steeve, Jamison Steeve of the Premier's office—"he did say throughout these notes that they were not there to negotiate; they were there to listen." He went on further to outline how important it was to reach a deal with TCE as opposed to going into litigation, and let me again quote: "In my experience of 40 years of litigating, if you can avoid litigation, you should. It's a process that is fraught with risk."

I think what Mr. Kelly did was point out that in the situation we were in, we took the best course in terms of negotiating.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I come from northern Ontario, and I've got to tell you, you can put as much baking soda on a dead skunk as you want; it still stinks.

Mr. Killeavy joined a long list of witnesses who told the committee the Liberal government knew, for months, the Oakville cancellation costs would be higher than \$40 million, but no Liberal will stand up and tell us when they knew that. Your Premier was either part of or leading the government that directed those bad proposals that drove up the cost.

Your government squandered \$585 million, all to benefit the Liberal seat-savers, instead of going to cancer treatments, MRIs or long-term care for seniors. Will somebody over there tell the Ontario taxpayers why you refused our confidence motion in this House yesterday?

Hon. John Milloy: The member opposite references the Premier, and I would remind him that it was this Premier who wrote to the Auditor General and asked him to expand his investigation to look into the Oakville situation. Mr. Speaker, let me quote what Mr. Michael Killeavy said in front of the committee. He said—listen to this—"These costs cannot be known with certainty at this point in time." He went on to say, "The cost of relocation of both plants are estimates which are dependent on assumptions and information which becomes available over time. Because of this, numbers can and do change." I think, Mr. Speaker, you would agree we've taken the responsible course in asking the Auditor General to look into this situation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about Mr. Killeavy, let's talk about what he said about the opposition's antics to have documents released during the negotiations that were going on. He had this to say: When we were at "the negotiations, we were always trying to keep a close eye on the costs ... to the ratepayer," keeping it "as low as possible." I'll finish it in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Deputy, your Premier's political apology was just that: political. At home when you break a window, you don't say, "I'm sorry the window broke." You say, "I'm sorry I broke the window." Your Premier said, "I'm sorry for the decisions that were made," and she said, "I'm sorry about the mistakes the government made." But it was the Premier who signed off on the

2011 arbitration agreement, and several other of you cabinet ministers signed off on that as well.

What Ontario wants to hear is, "I'm sorry I made those decisions," and somebody from the Liberal Party has got to stand up and say that. Will it take a judicial inquiry and the threat of jail doors slamming to get somebody over there to tell us the truth, Speaker?

Hon. John Milloy: The member talks about politics. Let's go back to last summer, when there were very delicate negotiations going on, and he and members of the opposition were calling for commercially sensitive documents to go forward. And as I said, this is what Mr. Killeavy had to tell the committee. You want to talk about Mr. Killeavy's testimony? This is what he said: When we were at "the negotiations, we're always trying to keep a very close eye on the costs and keep the costs to the ratepayer as low as possible. If documents had been disclosed, it could certainly prejudice our position in any negotiations."

Mr. Speaker, that honourable member and his colleagues could have cared less last summer when they were demanding sensitive documents to come forward which would have prejudiced the negotiations. He's one to talk about playing politics.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. We are pleased that after months of hard work by New Democrats, the Premier has agreed that she needed to own up and apologize for the gas plant fiasco.

But taking responsibility means more than just saying you're sorry; it means taking steps to make sure that it never happens again. Will the Minister of Finance be adding new accountability and transparency measures to his budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Accountability measures are critical in any operations of any government. It is why we introduced accountability measures in 2004 with the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. We took initial steps to ensure that any pre-election report be assessed appropriately so we don't have a repeat of what happened when they had a \$5-billion hole in their budget. Another item: we also provided an accountability act called the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act in 2010, again to bring higher accountability standards for lobbyists and enabling us to ensure that any activities going forward are measured and have proper oversight.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget, on pages 217 to 220 and pages 143 to 145, we have a number of accountability measures that have been added to ensure that we take proper steps and proper oversight measures always.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: None of those things that the finance minister just talked about stopped for one second what happened in the gas plant fiasco—not one of them.

1050

Speaker, words are easy to say, but taking action requires real leadership. New Democrats worked for weeks and we finally got an apology for the gas plant fiasco.

But now we need to see action to make sure we aren't back in the same situation on some other matter.

Will the finance minister agree that the Premier's apology is one thing but Ontarians want to see real action on accountability and transparency?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We agree that we have to enhance accountability on an ongoing basis. We recognize that certain mistakes occurred, and corrective actions have been taken. We have provided legislation, which has been stalled by the opposition, to try to do just that when it comes to air ambulance—and other measures. We are doing what's necessary.

The suggestions provided by the third party are interesting. We welcome the opportunity to have that discussion and we look forward to having a very productive conversation.

But let's get the budget passed. Let's move forward, because what's at stake right now is even greater, and that's the people of Ontario and ensuring that we take these initiatives that are in this budget to move forward. We're very open, and welcome any further enhancements that we can make to accountability measures.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Ontarians are tired of being let down by their government. I hope everyone agrees that Ontarians deserve better. An apology doesn't give families any comfort that waste and scandals will be stopped before they start.

Does the finance minister agree with Ontarians that the budget needs to be more transparent and more accountable to people in order to end all of the things that have happened in the past?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me refer to page 217 and page 143. We have chapters in this budget that speak to accountability. We have measures in here that speak to the initiatives to enhance and increase our accountability. We agree. We recognize how important it is to have these oversight measures in place. We're taking those steps. We've done so under the Ministry of Finance; we're doing so with all ministries, for that matter. And under the treasury board and management board of government, we're taking initiatives to ensure accountability.

So to the response to the member opposite: I appreciate your suggestions. We welcome them. We're taking actions on them as well.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the finance minister: Ontarians told us that the budget needed to be made more fair, accountable and transparent. Will the finance minister tell Ontarians if this government will actually start being accountable and create a financial accountability office?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the fourth question on the matter, and let me reaffirm that we're taking measures. We're taking precautions. We're taking steps to initiate even greater accountability. I appreciate the recommendations made by the third party. For that matter, I appreciate recommendations made by all parties.

What we need is to put forward a budget that does indeed speak to the people of Ontario. We have a budget that is balanced, that is fair and speaks to those who are wanting to invest in Ontario. It also speaks to those who are most vulnerable in Ontario to help them.

More importantly, we want our government to be accountable. We want our government to deliver on its issues, and we want the government to deliver for the people of Ontario. We're looking forward to doing that together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ontarians want and need this budget to be made more transparent, accountable and fair. Will the government ask Ontario's Ombudsman to oversee our health care system and act as an advocate for patients?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we need right now is to pass the budget that talks about creating jobs and promoting growth, that talks about being fair to all Ontarians and that talks about helping people in their everyday lives. This budget speaks to that.

It also speaks to measures to increase accountability to ensure that whatever government is in power, that it be accountable; whatever government and whatever programs are brought forward, that we have proper oversight. We recognize that. We share those same concerns. We want to make certain, though, that we pass this budget. Let's work towards making us all more accountable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ontarians told us that the budget needed to be made more transparent, accountable and fair. That's what they want to see. That's what they need to see.

Will the finance minister agree to stop telling families that they need to pay \$300 million to toll carpool lanes, while at the same time he hands a \$1.3-billion corporate tax loophole to corporations?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The notion of a tax loophole of \$1.3-billion is not true. It's not a loophole; it's not new; it is something that has been in existence, and the exemption comes forward in 2015 to 2018. We're asking the federal government to work with us to curb and stop those initiatives so that we can balance our books.

Around reducing gridlock, I would expect that the third party would agree that we need to enhance HOV lanes in order to initiate and reduce gridlock for the benefit of all Ontarians. The extra hour that a transport truck is stuck in traffic is an extra hour of lost productivity. We're talking about \$6 billion in lost productivity in this province because of gridlock. So we have to take these steps to move forward on that.

I would hope that we pass the budget. Let's work together for the benefit of all Ontarians.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise to ask the Minister of Finance a question. Minister, when I rose in the House

yesterday morning, your government had 36 hours to prevent an impending strike at the LCBO. Now there are 13 hours left to prevent a strike that would embarrass this province and hurt its tourism industry on this long weekend.

It's now a day later, and no progress has been made. In fact, OPSEU union bosses have ordered the set-up of dozens of strike headquarters across the province.

Minister, when people say that they want a dry long weekend, an LCBO strike is not what they had in mind. Will you stand with Ontarians today and prevent an LCBO walkout, or will you play your usual game and cower to the big union buddies in the public sector?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we respect the collective agreements. We want the LCBO and the employees to bargain in good faith. We recognize that the members opposite would rather create havoc and not allow for a collective agreement to occur. We're not doing that. We're going to allow them to have their discussions.

I'm hopeful and I'm confident that they'll come to an agreement so that we'll all enjoy a good long weekend. Let them do their thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, in the 2009 collective agreement, your Liberal government awarded OPSEU workers at the LCBO with a 7.75% wage increase over four years—almost double the rate of inflation. If the latest Statistics Canada data is to be believed, OPSEU is demanding that part-time staff at the LCBO be paid double—double—what the equivalent employee in the private sector would receive. That's double, Minister.

This government cannot afford to continue awarding big raises to unions at the expense of Ontario's fiscal future. Will the Minister of Finance stand here today and commit to taxpayers that no increases will be awarded and that liquor sales will proceed this weekend?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear: What the opposition wants are results, and what we've been able to achieve is close to zero-zero over the last couple of years. Our compensation envelope remains the same. Please recognize that our growth and spending have been below 1%, so we are achieving results.

We recognize that the parties all want to negotiate. Allow them that opportunity, because when they bargain in good faith, when they have that ability, it provides for the best result in the end.

I'm hopeful that we are going to have a resolution. A mediator is involved. A blackout is now before us. Let them do their work, and let's come to a resolution that all parties will agree to.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday, the Ontario Ombudsman came to the committee that was looking at Bill 11, the air ambulance act. Mr. Marin yet again urged the government to grant his office oversight of Ornge.

The Ombudsman had received complaints from whistle-blowers years before the scandal made the headlines. He was told about high executive compensation and the use of public dollars on the private side of Ornge, but he wasn't able to investigate. My question is simple: Has the minister heard enough proof? Is she finally ready to grant Ombudsman oversight of Ornge and our health care system?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted that Bill 11 is now before committee. I think members of the committee are doing their work, and that's exactly what they should be doing. Speaker, it's important to me that this legislation get passed. It's also important to me that the committee do their work, hear from witnesses and make their decisions about the bill going forward. I want to let that committee do its work. It's an important piece of legislation. I look forward to it coming back.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ombudsman oversight is not in the bill, and unless the minister gives her okay it will never be included in the bill. The committee cannot do this without the minister's support.

Ontarians were hoping that Ornge would mark the end of an era of scandals in our health care system. They want to be assured that our health care dollars are being properly spent and serving the needs of the people of Ontario. We will continue to lack accountability and transparency unless the Ombudsman receives the right to investigate complaints. The Ombudsman actually receives complaints about hospitals—hundreds of them every year—about long-term-care homes and continues to receive complaints about Ornge, but he doesn't have oversight.

Will the minister prove that her government is capable of learning from their mistakes and grant Ombudsman oversight of the health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the member opposite is deeply interested in making sure that health care in this province is delivered to patients who need it. I know that she would be interested in knowing what is happening at Ornge. There is a new patient advocate in place now. They've got a conflict-of-interest protocol established. Of course, they have a new CEO, a new COO and a new board. The salaries of senior leadership have been posted online. The whistleblower hotline is now active. The new medical interiors have been approved. The Thunder Bay base improvement plan has been approved. There are a lot of good things happening at Ornge, and I know that the member opposite would also be very happy to know that the two surplus helicopters have been sold.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the recent Ontario budget, I was thrilled to see the commitment made to continue to support northern regional development. I'm speaking specifically about the Northern Ontario Heritage

Fund Corp., which provides funding for entrepreneurs who are committed to creating jobs and growing businesses in northern Ontario communities.

When I was in Timmins and Thunder Bay for pre-budget consultation, I saw first-hand the positive impact this program is having in northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House how our government's commitment in the 2013 budget to the NOHFC will provide a positive impact on communities all across northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for the question. Certainly, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is something that, as a government, we're very, very proud of, and as northerners we're particularly proud of. May I say it's a thrill, as minister, to be in a position to chair the heritage fund board.

What we are excited about is our strong commitment in the 2013 budget: \$100 million in annual funding to the program, which of course is an increase of \$60 million from the last term. This is something that makes a great deal of difference in terms of job creation in the north. Some interesting statistics, Speaker: Since 2003, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has approved over \$834 million in funding, leveraging over \$3 billion toward 5,000-plus projects. Over 22,000 jobs have been created in the north and retained in the north—great news for economic development in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: After listening to the minister, it is quite clear that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is having a positive impact across the entire north.

Where I believe the NOHFC is having a big impact is in giving northern Ontario's young entrepreneurs the best possible start. While I was in Thunder Bay, I had a conversation with young Ontarians who were able to remain in their hometowns in northern Ontario because they were given an opportunity through NOHFC funding to start a business that provided them with the best possible start to their young entrepreneurial career. Although these entrepreneurs may have ventured down different business paths, what they have in common is that they are able to create jobs in northern Ontario.

Once again, through you, Speaker, to the minister: Can he please share with the House how young entrepreneurs from across northern Ontario are being positively impacted by our government's commitment to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm just, of course, delighted with the support from the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, and all my colleagues on all sides of the House. Certainly, speaking of the positive work the heritage fund is doing to support young entrepreneurs in northern Ontario—we want to keep our young people in the north.

We are supporting our young business people with creative and strong business ideas in creating their own job opportunities by opening up their own businesses. This does allow them to stay in their communities. It

allows them to contribute to the local economy and create jobs.

I could go through a long, long list—we've helped young entrepreneurs—we funded a fitness centre in Sudbury, a music studio in Kenora and a clothing company, a wonderful one that I patronize myself, in Thunder Bay, just to name a few. We've approved over 400 projects that have created over 800 jobs. It's truly tremendous to see the government working to keep young people in the north and helping them pursue their dreams and their visions.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: We have a made-in-Ontario crisis from years of neglecting our developmentally disabled. We've all heard the disturbing stories of families unable to cope.

The Callaghans are coming to Queen's Park today; 20-year-old Anna is developmentally disabled and requires care 24/7. Both parents work. Anna is eligible for 24 hours of nursing care a week. The Callaghans asked for only 34 hours a month, but in March, her agency could only provide 12. When Anna finishes her education next month, she will have no supports.

This afternoon, our health critic is calling for a select committee on developmental disabilities to ensure that Anna, the Callaghans and other families receive the support they require. Minister, do we have your support for this resolution?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I am proud to say, in support of the colleague opposite, that I will be delighted to support the motion this afternoon. I think that anything we can do together to address some of the serious challenges that we have is something that we must do.

I would just point out that one of the ways we're trying to address some serious challenges that we must all address is through our budget. I specifically point to the additional influx of dollars to assist in the developmental disabilities sector; I'm sure that the members opposite support that.

I'll be delighted to support the motion, and urge all my colleagues on this side to do the same thing. We can use all the help, together, that we can get, and if we can do it on behalf of the people who are most vulnerable, good for us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: While we are grateful and this sector is grateful for the money that has been allocated in this year's budget, we know that it will not be sufficient to help all of the 12,000 people who are on the wait-list for service. It will help somewhat, but there are some innovative solutions that are being proposed by service providers across the province. I believe that a select committee shall have the opportunity to explore those and be able to disseminate them across the province, so I

am very grateful for your support. We look forward to the committee being established—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mrs. Christine Elliott:—so it can begin its work as soon as possible, because, as the minister knows, the need is urgent.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to hear that. Anything that we can do together to respond more appropriately to the most vulnerable folk that are there and need our help is good. You're right: There are a lot of innovative ideas that we can't—

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Do you want to hear the answer?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Maybe your colleague in front, who asked a serious question, will have a chat with you, but we're with you. I think, together, we can get some important and good, innovative things done that will serve a lot more people. I think we'll all, in the end, be able to feel good about having worked together to do that.

1110

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. There are laws in this land that say you have to hang onto documents—you cannot shred documents as a result of leaving your employ. When you work in the Premier's office, when you work within the government, there's something that's called a preservation notice. Chris Morley, your chief of staff, along with all of the staff in the Premier's office, would have gotten these preservation notices in order to not shred documents.

The question to the Deputy Premier is this: Why did Chris Morley, the Premier's chief of staff, shred documents as he left the employ of the Premier last June?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: In terms of some of the specific cases that the honourable member raises, as members know there is a committee of this Legislature which is looking into the issue of documents—that was the main focus of the committee before it was broadened.

But in terms of the general question, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, both as House leader and as Minister of Government Services, that we take our obligations very seriously as a government. We are very committed to being open and transparent. There are record retention rules, as the honourable member is aware, that require that certain official government records are retained as long as needed. We have taken a number of steps in terms of new staff, particularly new political staff here, to make sure that they are aware of that obligation, and we certainly take it seriously and will continue to work with the system to make sure that the rules are followed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The rules were not followed; that's the point. People left the employ of the government as political staff and they destroyed the documents. They hit the delete button and cleared the archives so that the records would not exist to shed light on the decisions that were made by your government. How can you stand in this House and say that you're living up to the law when it's clear in committee—testimony says that they deleted the records?

So I say to you again: Are you above the law? How do you get the rights to shred records?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We have made every effort to provide the committee with the information they've requested. As members are aware, there were an initial 56,000 documents that have come forward. The committee has asked for other documents that we have worked diligently to provide to the committee.

The Premier not only asked the Auditor General to come in, not only offered a select committee, which the opposition, including that member's party, turned down, but she offered a broad government-wide search, broader than anything that had been asked for by the committee. We made that offer through Liberal members of the committee, and the opposition turned it down.

As I said, we take our obligation very seriously. We are working, particularly with new staff, to make sure that the safeguards are in place going forward.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the honourable minister responsible for seniors. Recently we witnessed some terrible instances of domestic senior abuse. Many seniors may find themselves weak and defenceless while others may suffer from conditions such as dementia, leaving them in a state of vulnerability.

For many seniors in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, this is a serious concern, but more so it is a concern for family members who worry and wonder how their loved ones can feel safe and secure in their residence.

Speaker, I'm asking the minister today: What measures is our government taking to ensure that our seniors living in retirement homes will not be subjected to abuse?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thanks to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Our government does not tolerate any form of elder abuse. It is my commitment and that of this government to make sure that our seniors live in healthy and safe homes.

We were the first government in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse, setting very clear terms for our seniors. In 2003, Ontario invested some \$8 million in elder abuse prevention and awareness initiatives. Additionally, in 2010, our government passed the Retirement Homes Act, the first provincial legislation protecting seniors in retirement homes, requiring them to have a policy in place promoting zero tolerance of elder abuse,

complying with the residents' bill of rights, ensuring mandatory annual staff training on fire prevention and safety, zero tolerance of elder abuse, and whistle-blowing as well—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for advising us on the measures already taken to prevent abuse and neglect of seniors.

But abuses take many different forms and are often perpetrated by close family members or acquaintances; sadly, these are not reported. Minister, it's a serious problem as too many remain silent due to fear, shame or lack of awareness. As you know, Minister, the senior population is growing—more than doubling by 2036. With that demographic in mind, the number of seniors seeking alternative living in retirement homes is going to rise dramatically as well. Through you, Speaker, to the minister: In order to prevent and eliminate elder abuse, could the minister please tell us what actions are being taken by the ministry?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I can appreciate the member's commitment to the well-being of seniors. Let me say, as the minister responsible for seniors, that the Premier and this government treat the well-being, safety and privacy of seniors in this province with utmost importance. Speaker, our proposed budget further addresses the elder abuse by continuing to commit to Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors to provide better access to health care, quality resources and improved safety and security for Ontario seniors. The budget also demonstrates that the government is committed to moving forward with additional recommendations concerning seniors' safety, as well as from Dr. Samir Sinha's report, *Living Longer, Living Well*. Together with public education, raising awareness, we can provide seniors with a safe and enjoyable retirement home.

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, I would like to inform you about a long-standing problem with our outdated labour laws in this province. For years, certain unions have successfully exploited a legal loophole in the Labour Relations Act that allows them to certify municipalities and school boards as if they were construction companies. Once this happens, the public sector employers become trapped in a labour monopoly which requires them, by law, to contract out all publicly funded infrastructure projects to companies organized by a specific union. This unfair practice on average restricts 70% of qualified contractors from working on public projects and increases infrastructure costs by 40%. Minister, will you take a stand for taxpayers today by closing this loophole?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member raising an important issue. I believe the member opposite will also be tabling a private member's bill on this matter today or sometime soon. I look forward to reading the bill and the content of the bill.

But as you know, Speaker, our government believes in a fair balance in labour relations. We want to make sure that all parties involved in labour negotiations have the opportunity to negotiate agreements that are fair to both parties. I do understand that some broader public service institutions have become bound to province-wide construction agreements. There is a provision within the Ontario Labour Relations Act that allows for those broader public service employers to seek exemptions. They have to file to the Ontario Labour Relations Board in order to do so, and then there's a process that ensues from there on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, that process is actually flawed, and this is not a project that can be reviewed, studied, analyzed, evaluated and assessed just so we can have another conversation about it. It requires action now. Certain unions have already trapped several public sector employers in labour monopolies, including Hamilton, Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie and the Essex school board; and now the region of Waterloo is at risk of becoming the next victim of this legal loophole, at a cost of roughly \$78 million. Minister, today in fact I'll be tabling the Fair and Open Tendering Act to protect taxpayers in my region and in all communities across this province. Will you take a stand for Ontario taxpayers and end closed tendering today?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I noticed with interest that the member opposite called the system flawed. I don't know if he remembers that it was in 1998 that Jim Flaherty, then Minister of Labour, actually put that system in place and then further on, in 2000, refined the system even further. The system we have in place was actually put in under the watch of the previous Conservative government, which is now the official opposition.

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So the system has been there and has worked well over the years. It's a system that is designed so that an arm's-length agency or tribunal like the Ontario Labour Relations Board is the one making the decision whether an employer is a construction or non-construction employer. The government should not be making those decisions; the board should be making decisions.

However, the member opposite is tabling a bill. I look forward to reading the bill and having further discussions with him on that.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Many children work in Ontario's recorded and live entertainment industries, and many of these children work in substandard conditions. Some very young toddlers are being denied basic rest periods, healthy snacks and safe waiting areas, and many older children work excessive hours each day.

Can the minister tell us what successive Liberal governments have done to provide real protection for child performers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, we obviously have, under our employment standards laws, strict rules around the kind of duties that children can participate in, and I look forward, obviously, to learning more about this issue with the member opposite. If he has any specific concerns, I ask him to provide me that information, and then we can work together on it.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to meet with the actors' union, ACTRA. They did not raise this issue to me, but I will, along with you, reach out to them to see if there are any specific issues so that we can, together, work to ensure that all children in our province are protected and nobody is abused or violated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday, I tabled Bill 71, the Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013. Writing this bill was a collaboration among ACTRA, Equity, my staff and legislative legal counsel. It's a good bill, and, coupled with strong regulations, will provide significant protection for child performers in Ontario. It will be a model for other provinces to follow.

Why has this government never supported legislation that would bring in long-overdue protection for child performers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, the member opposite is tabling a bill, and I look forward to reading the bill and giving it careful consideration, so thank you very much for your work on this, working with important partners and stakeholders on this, because it's important.

But I do want to say that we respect the member's concern for health and safety and employment standards, children enjoying the workplace. In fact, to address those concerns regarding the implementation of health and safety laws for children in this industry, we have an excellent and readily accessible child performance guideline for reference. If that guideline is not sufficient and your bill has some more to offer, let's work together and see how we can improve on it.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We have made great strides in our education system. Our graduation rates and test scores continue to rise, and our education system is considered one of the best in the English-speaking world, if not the world.

But to have a great education system, it's so important that we do more to ensure that all of our students, no matter where they live, have access to a world-class education. I know that there is a lot more work that needs to be done to address the student achievement gap between aboriginal students and non-aboriginal students. At my budget breakfast last Friday, there was concern by several people about this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Could the minister please inform this House what is being done to improve educational outcomes for aboriginal youth?

Hon. David Zimmer: Closing the achievement gap between aboriginal students and non-aboriginal students, whether it's on reserve or off-reserve, is a priority for this Premier, it's a priority for me as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and I know it's a priority for the Minister of Education, and I'll ask the Minister of Education in the supplementary to give some of the details.

But closing that gap is important, because education is the key to raising oneself up in socio-economic status. In that regard, last Monday or Tuesday night, I, along with Jeff Leal, the Minister of Rural Affairs, participated in a conference at Trent University, one of the leading universities for aboriginal studies in Canada. Tom Symons, Harvey McCue, Paul Martin and aboriginal leaders, experts in aboriginal education—we had a conversation to begin addressing this issue.

Similarly, I attended a conference in Winnipeg: all aboriginal affairs ministers but no federal participation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: We can all agree we want a fair and equal Ontario. I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has taken such strong interest in improving student achievement for aboriginal students. I know that our budget commits further funding to support our aboriginal students.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are some other initiatives our government has undertaken to assist aboriginal students?

Hon. David Zimmer: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans for his excellent question. I've been pleased to work very closely with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs as we work towards improving outcomes for aboriginal students. For example, last month, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the federal government and our government signed an historic memorandum of understanding. The agreement calls for all three parties to work together to support NAN youth so that they have every opportunity at success.

Our government is providing over \$45 million to improve student achievement for First Nation students. Our budget, which we should get passed, commits an additional \$5 million per year to support our aboriginal students. We know that more work needs to be done to support aboriginal student achievement in Ontario, and our government is committed to ensuring that all students in Ontario have access to our world-class education system.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, can you tell me how much first-hand experience the Ministers of Environment, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Rural Affairs have in dealing with industrial wind turbines?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for Huron—Bruce for the question. We're talking about renewable

energy projects in the province of Ontario—a significant part of our long-term energy plan. The FIT program has generated 31,000 jobs. It has had a very large take-up in rural communities. In fact, over the last two or three weeks, I've met with a number of co-ops with very significant representation from farmers in the rural community. They are asking for more renewable projects. They're looking for more procurement so they can be part of eliminating dirty coal generation in the province of Ontario.

We're going to continue working with renewable energy proponents, including those in the rural areas. We have had some difficulties, particularly in the rural areas. We're addressing those by putting together a program that will give municipalities more control, particularly over wind.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, I can tell you that the people on this side of the House have lots of experience in dealing with wind turbines. You would be wise to listen to us because, I'm sorry to say, this window is broken, too. Your working group of four is a little too late in devising a proper plan for the siting of wind turbines. Nevertheless, I hope your plans include going to places like Huron county and Bruce county and talking to people who are facing 1,000 more turbines around their homes. And don't forget about the people of Simcoe–Grey, Durham, Amherst Island, Wellington–Halton Hills, Haldimand–Norfolk, Dufferin–Caledon, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Northumberland–Quinte West, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Perth–Wellington, Nipissing, Prince Edward–Hastings and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, while you're at it.

Minister, your Premier talks about wanting to work together in this Parliament. In the spirit of working together and co-operating, will you invite members of the opposition to join your working group to provide firsthand insight and halt the construction of industrial wind turbines until—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to refer this to the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Our government believes a strong, healthy Ontario includes strong, healthy rural communities. Our government is committed to working with municipalities on the siting of wind turbines—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough.

Answer, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, don't start right as soon as I stop.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —with rural municipalities and stakeholders, and we'll continue to advocate for them as we move forward on this very important issue.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. It is now being reported that the OLG has a funding formula for a Toronto casino. OLG is telling people they have provided that formula to the Premier's office. Will the government come clean and tell Ontarians if OLG has provided the funding formula to this government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have transformational changes happening at the OLG. We've made a commitment that we will also revise the funding formula to be equitable and equal throughout the province. We're taking the steps necessary to reflect those issues and to ensure that everyone is treated equally.

But I think what the matter that the member is asking is the decision that has to be now made by those municipalities and, in this case, Toronto. Toronto has before them a decision to make with regard to proponents who are looking to invest over \$3 billion in capital infusion. Regardless of the hosting fee, they have to make a determination if they are interested in having a casino and, for that matter, all the other aspects that they're proposing to bring forward.

I will say this: We will release the formula when we are comfortable that it does, in fact, allow for equity and fairness throughout the entire province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's absolutely clear now that the government has the formula and that they refuse, and have refused, to release it. The government needs to be transparent about its plans for a Toronto casino. They need to be transparent with this Legislature. They need to be transparent with the city council, and most importantly they need to be transparent with all Ontarians.

OLG says it has provided the government with the funding formula for the Toronto casino. Will the finance minister come clean with Ontarians and stop hiding the new casino funding formula?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The formula already exists. What we're looking for is alternatives to actually enhance the valuations of these hosting fees right across the province. It's not going to be unique to Toronto; it's going to be for the entire province. We have alternatives that we're reviewing. When we are comfortable with those reviews, when we are comfortable with how best to address the needs of the entire province, not just one municipality, we will release it.

We're not hiding anything; it's already there to be seen. What is necessary, though, is that the municipalities and those that have the funding formulas before us now make a determination if, in fact, they want to even entertain the notion of having a casino in their respective municipality.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Research and Innovation. I

know our province has made significant employment gains since the end of the recession. Our government has invested in programs and initiatives that increase employment and grow our economy. But while important gains have been made, our youth employment rate simply needs to be better.

When I speak to young people in my riding of Oakville and around Ontario, they say the government needs to continue taking action and needs to continue to invest in programs that increase employment opportunities for young people.

Ontario's young people are highly educated. They're very talented. They're very capable. It's important that we provide them with the opportunities that they need to succeed.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is this government doing to improve employment opportunities for young people in the province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Oakville for that question. Creating opportunities for Ontario's youth is a priority for our government. I am proud to say that our budget reaffirms this commitment. With an investment of \$295 million, our government's comprehensive youth jobs strategy will help promote employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation for youth in this province of Ontario.

As the Minister of Research and Innovation, I have a first-hand opportunity to see the effect of entrepreneurship and innovation in the production of results. Through entrepreneurship and innovation, jobs are created, economic growth is possible, and also, solutions to our challenges can be found.

Mr. Speaker, our government's youth jobs strategy recognizes the importance of supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in this province. They are the driving force for our future and the foundation for our knowledge-based economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm glad to hear we are continuing to make those investments in programs that support our youth.

Our budget commitment of \$295 million to Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, I think, is an important step in improving youth employment. It's an investment that I'm proud to tell my constituents about in Oakville. By investing in initiatives that support youth employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation, our province will be able to compete and succeed in today's global knowledge-based economy.

With increasing competition and an aging population, it's more important than ever that we provide our youth with the training, the tools and the skills that they need to succeed. Ontario's success, obviously, is directly linked to the success of our youth.

Through you, Speaker: Can the Minister of Innovation please tell us more about the youth jobs strategy in the province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I thank the member from Oakville for that question.

Our youth jobs strategy will bring together youth, young professionals and community leaders to help develop training and employment opportunities. Through the youth jobs strategy, our government has committed \$45 million to the Ontario Youth Entrepreneurship Fund. This fund will help generate nearly 6,000 mentorship and job opportunities.

Our government will also invest \$30 million in the Ontario Youth Innovation Fund. This fund will support our youth to develop the skills they need to conduct research and commercialize their innovation. It will also support young entrepreneurs at universities and colleges.

By investing in initiatives that support employment, entrepreneurship and innovation, our youth will have the opportunity to succeed and ensure that our province of Ontario will remain as a leader in the global market.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing 38(a), the member for Huron—Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the working group on siting industrial wind turbines. This matter will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All day.

This matter will be debated Thursday, May 28, at 6 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have some sad news. This is the last day for our pages. We want to thank them for the wonderful work that they have done and wish them well back at school.

Applause.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment has indicated he's going to double their pay.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome, in the members' gallery, members from the Progressive Contractors Association, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, Merit Ontario and the Ontario Road Builders' Association here to Queen's Park as I present my bill, the Fair and Open Tendering Act. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Introduction of guests.

Mr. John O'Toole: As we are all celebrating today wearing the carnations for the MS Society, I'm very pleased to introduce three members from the MS organ-

ization, whom I met with at break: Carolyn Allman, an ambassador for MS, from Peterborough; Michael Roche, the social action director for MS, from Whitby—I've known Michael for a long time; and Fanuel Ephraim, an MS ambassador from Oshawa. They bring forward a very important argument.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John O'Toole: This government's response to the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants scandal has finally led to a public apology, but not an accurate public apology. As Vic Fedeli said today, they should say, "I'm sorry for breaking the window"; not "I'm sorry the window is broken." Do you understand? Take ownership for your own actions, or lack of them. Given the government's history of delays and denial, the apology is simply too little, too insincere and too late.

Many Ontarians see the apology as yet another attempt at crisis management—and they've got lots of them. Most constituents of mine feel the McGuinty-Wynne government has reached the point where it will say anything to make this \$600-million scandal go away.

The government can show it is sincere in its apology by agreeing to a judicial hearing into what went wrong and who knew what when. This government could have proven its sincerity by submitting to a confidence debate which was called for by our leader, Tim Hudak.

Stand up and do the right thing. Bring some transparency and accountability to this Legislature.

I can only say that this government has come full circle, from denial to a public apology, and there's nothing to indicate anything has substantially changed. It's a shame.

CONCESSION STREETFEST

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a pleasure that I rise today in support of an annual festival in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. On Saturday, June 1, the Concession Street BIA will be hosting Hamilton's biggest single-day festival, the Concession StreetFest.

This festival has become a hallmark of my community. In fact, this is the 17th year that the BIA will organize this one-day festival. It has free admission, and it offers entertainment, including petting zoos, face painting, inflatable bouncers, live entertainment, cultural variety shows and several art exhibits.

This year, we will try to break the Guinness world record to have the most people blowing bubbles at the same time. Last year, we tried kazoos. Unfortunately, we were not successful. So I encourage all Hamilton residents and those from around the area to come out and participate in StreetFest and assist in our quest to break the Guinness world record.

The volunteers from the BIA have not gone unrecognized. This year, Concession StreetFest has been nominated for the Hamilton Spectator's 2013 Reader's Choice Awards for best entertainment—favourite event or festival.

On behalf of my many constituents, I wish to thank the many volunteers of the Concession Street BIA who have worked hard over the past 17 years. Each year the festival gets bigger and better, and we owe it to these volunteers who commit so much of their time and energy.

I look forward to seeing everyone there on June 1.

AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As the MPP for Vaughan, I am proud to recognize the contributions of my local Ahmadiyya Muslim community, which continues to show great dedication both in their yearly organization of interfaith events and in their dutiful promotion of peace and harmony in my riding.

This Saturday, May 18, marks the opening ceremony and inauguration of the Bait ur Rahman Mosque in Vancouver, British Columbia. This mosque will be the largest of its kind in British Columbia, and we have a number of members from my community of Vaughan and from the greater Ontario Ahmadiyya community travelling to Vancouver to attend this important event.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at was founded in 1889 and currently has over 15,000 mosques, 500 schools and 30 hospitals serving communities all over the world. Membership in the Ahmadiyya community exceeds tens of millions of individuals, each promoting the Ahmadiyya values of "love for all and hatred for none." Of equal importance to the community is their emphasis on interfaith harmony and integration, both of which are fundamental values that we can all stand by and support.

Islam places great importance and emphasis on the building of mosques, therefore the inauguration at the Bait ur Rahman Mosque is no small achievement. The Ahmadiyya community of Ontario, led by their national president, Lal Khan Malik—who happens to be a resident of my riding—has truly contributed to the success of our province. I am thankful to them and to those individuals from their community who are active in Vaughan.

I want to send my sincerest thanks and congratulations to those celebrating the opening of the new Bait ur Rahman Mosque both in Vaughan and in the province of Ontario generally.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today, I wish to share with this House one of the reasons why I take great pride in representing the beautiful riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. My constituents have always stepped up to help people in need, and once again, the city of Cornwall has added a new chapter to this proud history.

Recently, disastrous flooding in northern and central Ontario has forced many residents out of their homes—

among them, the residents of the remote Kashechewan First Nations community on the shores of James Bay, who required temporary accommodations. Cornwall did not hesitate to welcome them with open arms, under the program run by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Kashechewan residents were welcomed in Cornwall during the state of emergency and housed in Cornwall's largest, state-of-the-art hospitality facility, the Nav Centre, on the shores of the St. Lawrence River.

I'm proud to tell this House that local residents contacted city hall offering any and all assistance that may be required for the displaced First Nations residents, some of whom already had the opportunity to experience Cornwall's welcome in 2005 due to a similar natural event.

I congratulate the city of Cornwall, Nav Canada, and my local residents for stepping up when help for fellow Ontarians was needed, and to take the opportunity to highlight our region's potential. The displaced Kashechewan residents flew into Summerstown Regional Airport, only a few kilometres east of the city, in South Glengarry. The Nav Centre provided outstanding hospitality, catering, training and conference space, and has recently undergone renovations to enhance its already superior accommodations. Our region has much to offer and a warm welcome will always be there for you whether in times of need, on business, or just visiting.

SCHOOLS IN TORONTO–DANFORTH

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my honour to recognize two schools in my riding that are celebrating great anniversaries the weekend of May 25. Holy Name Catholic School is located at Carlaw and Danforth. It first opened its doors to elementary students in 1913. Today, it has 350 students from every part of Toronto's multicultural mosaic. It reflects the history of the area. The Holy Name community has changed over the years, just as the Danforth has, from predominantly Irish in the early decades, with a strong Italian community in the 1950s and 1960s, and finally, to the multicultural community that populates the school today. It's a great school, a key part of the community.

On the north side of the Danforth, Jackman school, appropriately, on Jackman Avenue, is holding its 50th anniversary celebration on Saturday, the 25th. With 700 students, Jackman has roughly half its students in French immersion. It's a platinum eco-school with a green roof—the only school that has one in my riding—and is home to a beloved child care centre, Jackman Community Daycare.

Speaker, the weekend of May 25 is a big weekend for these two schools and for my community. I wish them all the best of success and many more years to come.

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ROBBIE'S RAINBOW

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a real pleasure to stand in the Legislature today to tell you about the inspirational

efforts made by a young man in my community whose name is Robbie Murray. He's a nine-year-old boy, and he lives in Oakville, and he has Crohn's disease.

Crohn's is a destructive disease that eats away sections of the intestinal lining of your digestive tract. Robbie has been battling Crohn's disease since he was six years old. Traditional treatment, in his case, was not successful, but a new drug called Remicade has helped Robbie fight back.

It has now become Robbie's mission to help other children struggling with severe Crohn's disease receive the biologic drug treatments they desperately need but sometimes can't afford. So Robbie and his mother, Kate, created Robbie's Rainbow. It's a charitable organization that's dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of children who are living with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Robbie's Rainbow has raised funds with candy sales and fundraising parties with silent auctions, and they had a great gala last Saturday evening. Since 2010, they've helped over 20 other children access critical drug care.

I'd like to applaud Kate, Robbie and all the ambassadors from Robbie's Rainbow for the inspirational efforts to commit their time and skills to make a difference in the lives of children who are living with Crohn's disease.

BRUCE POWER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to congratulate the largest operating nuclear facility in the world, Bruce Power, on their 12th anniversary, which was celebrated this past week.

Not only were they celebrating their anniversary, but they also launched their free iPad application to provide people in Ontario with an interactive tool which has an energy calculator to better understand the cost of their energy bills. This feature allows users to input their monthly electricity use and compare the costs of the different sources of energy generation, the average percentage cost impact from each source and the amount of CO₂ produced.

The app also provides extensive information on the role Bruce Power plays in Ontario to provide a safe, reliable source of affordable electricity, through videos, news feeds and interactive figures. The app also features Bruce Power's extensive engagement efforts to improve the lives of people in communities it serves, and it also provides user tips on things we can do to conserve electricity.

Bruce Power has always been at the front of innovation, and this is no exception. The free app can be downloaded at www.brucepowerapp.com. We look forward to their future BlackBerry application as well. Users who download the application before June 15 have the opportunity to enter a draw to win free electricity for a year.

I want to congratulate Bruce Power and their president and CEO, Duncan Hawthorne for their 12 years of innovation, community dedication and clean, affordable energy production.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member's statement? The member for Pickering-Ajax.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Pickering-Ajax is fine, Mr. Speaker; it is listed as Ajax-Pickering.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax-Pickering.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member from Ajax-Pickering, I would like to take this opportunity today to bring to the Legislature's attention the initiatives taken on ability and access in Ontario.

In 2005, our government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, to provide accessibility standards to achieve a barrier-free Ontario by 2025. Ontario now has accessibility standards mandated in five key areas: customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation, and the design of public spaces.

But expanding and improving accessibility is an ongoing process that demands co-operation. My hometown, the municipality of Ajax, has established a 10-member accessibility advisory committee to provide advice to council on specific initiatives to be undertaken by the town to remove barriers, as intended by the AODA.

In 1987, Rick Hansen's Man in Motion tour brought issues of ability and access into the national spotlight. In response, National Access Awareness Week was formally recognized across Canada. It is in support of the initiatives like those of the town of Ajax, and at their humble request, that I formally announce May 26 to June 1, 2013, as National Access Awareness Week. NAAW celebrates the achievements made by and for people with disabilities, with the intention of public awareness. This noble campaign is yet another step in creating a more accessible Ontario.

As a colleague of mine once said, "At the end of the day, a more accessible Ontario is a stronger, healthier and fairer Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for his statement.

COBOURG COUGARS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Today I'm pleased to rise and congratulate the Cobourg Lakeland Multitrade Cougars hockey team on winning the Ontario Minor Hockey Association minor bantam A championships. In recent years, the Cougars have made it to the semifinals and even the finals but were, sadly, robbed of the championship—but not this year. This year the Cougars won the championship with a commanding 7-3 victory over the Burlington Eagles.

I want to extend congratulations to the dedicated coaching staff: Joe Ferguson, Gord Oosterhof, Mike Ainsworth, Jeff Snyder and head coach, Rick Ainsworth. Your dedication to youth hockey is an inspiration.

I especially want to thank the Cougars players—Max Carlson, Jeff Scott, Kavan Dobos, Kyle Snyder, Sean Hill, Brayden McGregor, Corey Saman, Nikolas Van Laren, Tanner Sheppard, Nicholas Ainsworth, Jarret Desormeaux, Jacob Massie, Noah Dickinson, David Torrie, Nicholas Oosterhof, Greg Peters and Jacob Kellar—for an outstanding season of hockey. You gentlemen worked hard and brought an OHA championship home to Cobourg. Congratulations.

I also want to thank Lakeland Multitrade for their continued support of the Cougars. The tremendous impact your sponsorship has on the families and the community of Cobourg cannot be overstated.

I look forward to cheering on the Cougars in the 2013-14 season. Go, Cougars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAIR AND OPEN TENDERING ACT (LABOUR RELATIONS FOR CERTAIN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR DES APPELS D'OFFRES ÉQUITABLES ET OUVERTS (RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL CHEZ CERTAINS EMPLOYEURS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC DANS L'INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to certain public sector employers in the construction industry / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne certains employeurs du secteur public dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: The Fair and Open Tendering Act would prevent municipalities and school boards from becoming trapped in labour monopolies by exempting them from the construction sector provisions in the Labour Relations Act.

For years, certain unions have successfully exploited a legal loophole in Ontario's labour laws that allows them to certify municipalities and school boards as though they were construction companies. If organized, these public sector employers are forced to accept a collective agreement that is bargained at a provincial level on behalf of all construction employers and which contains stringent contracting-out restrictions. This bill would end this practice by exempting municipalities and school boards

from province-wide bargaining in the construction industry.

TRIPLE "D" HOLDINGS LTD. ACT, 2013

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr17, An Act to revive Triple "D" Holdings Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

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FAIRNESS AND COMPETITIVENESS IN ONTARIO'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ ET LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DANS L'INDUSTRIE ONTARIENNE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Mr. McNaughton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to alter bargaining rights conferred by pre-1980 working agreements in the construction industry / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour modifier le droit de négocier conféré par des accords de fait conclus avant 1980 dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to introduce my bill, the Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's Construction Industry Act. Quite simply, a newly uncovered wrinkle in Ontario's construction labour laws means that an established Ontario construction company is now being forced to increase its use of unionized labour while new, and often foreign, competition is not. This puts the Ontario company at a crippling disadvantage and has created an uneven playing field that mainly benefits out-of-province competitors who are not impacted by the same outdated law from 1958. This act will fix a problem and save thousands of Ontario jobs. I ask my colleagues here today to join me in supporting this important bill and supporting Ontario jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to introduction of bills for the next round, I remind all members that reading the explanatory note of the bill is the common practice. If that is indeed a part of the explanatory note, I accept that. Just as a reminder.

Introduction of bills. Introduction of bills. Last call for introduction of bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, the month of May is South Asian Heritage Month, and each year since it was proclaimed in the House in 2001, it has become our tradition to observe this month and recognize a community that has helped build this province. I invite all honourable members to join me in acknowledging the significant contributions Ontario's South Asian community has made and continues to make in our great province.

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the first immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. On May 5, 1838, hundreds of South Asians arrived and began to settle in the Americas. More than a century later, many migrated to Canada and to Ontario.

Today, Ontario's South Asian community is more than a million strong and extremely diverse in culture, religion, language, heritage and tradition. They have roots in countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Uganda, Kenya and several countries throughout the Caribbean. Here in Ontario they have made a significant impact—culturally, socially and economically.

We are proud of the many achievements South Asian Canadians have made in the fields of education, health care, arts, business, science and, of course, politics. One just looks around this room and you can recognize that contribution. We are proud of their success. Canadians of South Asian heritage help make our province stronger and a more wonderful place for all of us to live.

This month, let us join in festivities being held across the province to celebrate the rich South Asian culture, and let us also take time to recognize how diversity has helped shape this great province we call home.

POWERLINE SAFETY WEEK

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I rise in the House today to mark the province's first ever Powerline Safety Week. The theme this year is "Look Up, Look Out and Locate!"

Over the past 10 years, Speaker, 28 people across the province have been fatally injured after coming in contact with live power lines. That's why Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority, the ESA, is focused on raising awareness about how people across Ontario can keep safe at work, at home and in their communities.

Speaker, and honourable members of this House, by working together with its partners, the ESA is on track to reduce the number of electrical fatalities, injuries and accidents, and they're one step closer to accomplishing their ultimate goal, which is having zero electrical fatalities and injuries in Ontario.

We know that we still have work to do when it comes to electrical safety, especially in the workplace. Some 73% of known electrical incidents occur in the construction sector, where heavy equipment such as cranes

and dump trucks can often hit power lines, particularly when there are no dedicated staff that are spotting on these sites. In fact, over 60% of electrical fatalities on the job can be attributed to improper procedures. We also know that electrical tradespeople account for 29% of all electrical-related fatalities in the workplace. These are serious and sobering figures.

Etched in my mind, and I'm sure in the minds of many people in Elora, Ontario, is a horrifying example of a workplace incident that occurred in December 2011. A 29-year-old man working for a private company was killed when the aluminum pole he was using to string Christmas lights outside a home in Elora came into contact with an overhead power line. The young man collapsed and was pronounced dead at the scene. The incident was especially upsetting because it occurred just a few weeks before the holiday season. Hearing about preventable accidents like this one serves as an important reminder that in addition to the workplace, safety at home and in the community is also important.

This is a very interesting statistic, Speaker: 75% of all fatalities outside the workplace happen around the home or in public places. That's why Powerline Safety Week, the first ever in Ontario, strives to put electrical safety top of mind, so people are aware of what to look for and how to protect themselves.

As we mark this very first week of power line safety, I ask all honourable members of the House to keep these safety tips in mind, and I ask this of all Ontarians as well. Share them with your family and your friends; members can share them with their constituents as well.

If you work on a construction site, always have a spotter to make sure equipment is placed well away from power lines. Also, be sure to remove or prepare for any hazards before beginning a job on a job site.

Check all power lines before cleaning eavestroughs or pruning trees. When digging in your yard, call your local utility company to check for underground cables. Most importantly, use a licensed electrical contractor for any electrical work that needs to be done at home. Finally, if you do see a downed power line, stay back from it and call 911 immediately.

I encourage everyone to visit the ESA's website at esasafe.com for information and tips about staying safe from electrical hazards. Let's all work together to keep our families, friends, communities and workplaces safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It is with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to recognize South Asian Heritage Month.

This annual tradition began through legislation crafted by a former member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Ontario PC Raminder Gill, who I believe had the distinction of being Ontario's first South Asian MPP.

Raminder understood the importance of recognizing Ontario's South Asian community, and that belief led to the creation of this month, a month that showcases the accomplishments of the South Asian community, commemorates the history of South Asian Canadians and honours their ongoing legacy. That legacy is deep and wide, drawing as it does on direct and indirect migrants—people who trace their roots to not just India and Pakistan but also Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean and beyond. That diversity is a great blessing.

All of these things enrich the culture and economy of this province and are all important elements in making Ontario one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise a family.

My riding of Burlington is located in the region of Halton, whose dynamic communities owe a great deal to the South Asian community. India is the top source country for newcomers to Halton. In Milton, the fastest-growing community in not just the province but also the country, Urdu is the most popular non-official language.

Since arriving here at Queen's Park, I have had the opportunity to spend time with leaders in the South Asian community, celebrating the achievements of individuals like Halton Police Constable Hardy Singh, and to take part in outstanding events like Diwali in Brampton, Khalsa Day festivals in Toronto and this weekend's Punjabi International Film Festival.

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The South Asian community is an integral part of a diverse society whose people are bound together by respect for our varied backgrounds and experiences. Their story of creativity, industry, passion and perseverance is one that all Ontarians should celebrate, not just in South Asian Heritage Month, but all year round.

POWERLINE SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to recognize Powerline Safety Week. I'd like to commend the minister, in following her and her remarks. I'd like to take this opportunity, as well, to congratulate the Electrical Safety Authority and the newly formed Community Powerline Safety Alliance for the development and promotion of this important public awareness. At home or on the job site, it is important that workers are aware of the dangers that exist in their environment and are vigilant in their efforts to reduce their exposure to those risks.

The importance of power line awareness cannot be overstated. The existing network of power lines crisscrossing Ontario touches virtually every single home, business and building in Ontario. Everyone working at elevation or digging into the ground needs to be fully aware of the location of power lines before they begin any projects.

Unfortunately, as long as people continue to ignore these risks of operating in close proximity to power lines

without full awareness of their location, workers and homeowners in Ontario will continue to suffer serious injury and/or death. Working around power lines must be done with extreme caution and precision.

Prior to representing Sarnia–Lambton at Queen's Park, I worked for over 30 years in Sarnia–Lambton's world-class petrochemical industry. For a number of years during that period, I worked as an industrial crane operator. Job one as a crane operator was always to locate the potential hazards, like power lines, in the vicinity of a job site, or as the Electrical Safety Authority puts it, "Look up, look out and locate!"

In the same spirit of Powerline Safety Week, last June this Legislature took action to create a province-wide notification system for the location of underground utilities, to remind people to always call before they dig. By June 19, 2014, all owners of underground infrastructure in the province will actively be participating in the location of utilities, with the intent of reducing dangerous accidental strikes when digging and excavating.

It is my hope that Powerline Safety Week will generate that same outpouring of support from stakeholders as Ontario One Call, and will grow to have the same positive impact on homeowners for workers' safety across the province.

In closing, let me reiterate the message of Powerline Safety Week: When working outside, always look up, look out and locate.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am proud to rise on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to join in celebrating South Asian Heritage Month. I think it's a great time to celebrate the unique diversity that we have here that makes up the Canadian mosaic, and the Ontarian mosaic, as well.

One of the unique and very important aspects of South Asian Heritage Month is, while there are eight countries represented by the region, each country has a unique and vibrant culture within that country, and there are numerous languages and cultures spoken. I'm going to try to talk about and quickly address each, or many, of the ones that I can, and I apologize for not being able to cover them all.

The countries have been listed—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Myanmar—but within each country there is a myriad of other communities as well. For example, there is Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Sinhalese, Telugu, Malayali, Marathi, Pashto, Balochi, Hakka, Rajasthani, Hyderabad, Goan, and Mangalorean. There is a multitude of languages spoken, like Hindi, Urdu and Farsi, as well as others which represent a community and a culture as well as a language.

There's such diversity, and one of the beauties is that when we celebrate the diversity of communities, we do two things: One is that we celebrate the importance of having a unique culture and a value, but also we see that

there are so many similarities, despite our differences. Despite the unique, diverse elements of various communities and cultures, there is always that underlying commonality that we all share. I think that that's something that we should all celebrate; when we celebrate our diversity, we also celebrate our commonality as well.

I am very excited and very honoured to rise today to celebrate this month. I think it recognizes the contributions that South Asians have made in Canada and Ontario. One of the most important things that we can do as politicians, as elected officials, is we can recognize the great work of other communities and other people. That's one of the great honours that I think we all have in this honourable House, that we can go to events and recognize the great work that volunteers, activists and community organizers do to add to the beauty and the vibrant nature of our communities and our cultures and our societies. I think that's a great, great thing we can do, and I encourage everyone to take part in the various events that are going on in your ridings across Ontario to celebrate our diversity, to celebrate those unique communities that bring so much to where we live and add such a distinct flavour and value to our lives and to our society.

Thank you so much, on behalf of the New Democratic Party. We join everyone in celebrating South Asian Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses? Member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, carry on.

POWERLINE SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also am proud, as part of the New Democratic Party and as the critic for consumer services, to join with the minister in celebrating this week being the first-ever Powerline Safety Week; it runs until May 19.

As stated by colleagues from both parties, this week is essentially about spreading awareness that could potentially save a life. Any time we can spread awareness and spread knowledge that can help in saving lives, I think we need to take that opportunity to do so.

I support this initiative because over the decade, 28 Ontarians have died due to contact with live power lines. Sadly, the reality is that these deaths could have been prevented. Most of these incidents occurred around the construction sector, where heavy equipment such as cranes and dump trucks can hit a power line, and it's on busy sites where there are no dedicated spotters that this becomes a particular concern. A large factor in how these accidents happen can be attributed to improper procedure. If it's improper procedure that causes these accidents, then it's proper procedure that can prevent them.

We as a society have an obligation to ensure that our work environments are safe for employees, and one way to ensure they are safe is to have proper procedures and guidelines in place. The Community Powerline Safety Alliance, a group formed by the Electrical Safety Authority, ESA, a safety organization of educational institutions and local utilities, including PowerStream,

has used a slogan—the slogan has been repeated, and I think it assists to repeat it again, “Look up, look out and locate!” when it comes to power lines near their homes, in their communities or where they work. This is a basic step and a very powerful slogan that can assist in preventing very preventable deaths in our society.

Also, when digging in your garden or for fence posts or deck supports, please make sure you call Ontario One Call at 1-800-400-2255 to check for all marked underground cables.

Children, obviously, should not be playing around power lines or electrical equipment.

I think we can all do our part to ensure we prevent these deaths. I’m happy that in my riding, Hydro One Brampton has been using this slogan in their industry updates. Again, “Look up, look out and locate!”

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I feel a need to ask us to get back into some kind of normalcy for petitions. I’m going to ask the member from Durham to start us off.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to lead off the parade here this afternoon.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning major changes” to the provision of OHIP physiotherapy services “as of August 1st ... ; and

“Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

“Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year; and

“Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

“Whereas under the changes scheduled for August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to”—listen to this one—“\$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

“Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the de-listing of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not proceed and that the provincial government guarantee there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and all those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy.”

I’m pleased to sign this and ask John Yakabuski to be quiet.

1340

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from all over Ontario, including the Minister of Education’s riding.

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

“Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

“Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

“Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to Kelly to be delivered.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

As I am in favour, I have affixed my signature and give it to page Ethan.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that's signed by a substantial number of my constituents and people who live in Guelph as well, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

I have affixed my signature to the petition.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Jim McDonell: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas current community care access centre and personal support worker guidelines do not provide a clear indication of whether PSWs are allowed to support patients' activities outside the home; and

"Whereas patient health is best ensured through an active, healthy lifestyle that may involve activities outside the patient's home; and

"Whereas the spirit of community care includes patient access to their community's healthy lifestyle resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact all necessary statutes that would allow personal support workers and other community care access centre staff to support their patients and clients both in the home and in necessary activities in their communities."

I support this with the many petitions I have and will be passing it off to page Brigid.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: A number of my constituents from Newmarket and Aurora have signed this petition. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

"Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while

enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

"Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary."

I'm prepared to affix my signature to this petition in support.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the proposed closure of the Sarnia Jail will impact" at least "76 employees and result in a loss of over \$6 million" in payroll "to the local Sarnia-Lambton community; and

"Whereas the" McGuinty-Wynne "government states that the Sarnia Jail is underutilized while in fact it is currently at 105% capacity; and

"Whereas there are no costs currently associated with transporting inmates from the Sarnia Jail to the Sarnia courthouse, and transporting inmates from Windsor to Sarnia will greatly increase costs, costs which may become a burden to the city of Sarnia and thus local taxpayers; and

"Whereas the mayor, local OPP, the Sarnia police chief, the RCMP, aboriginal police, First Nations chiefs and the Canadian border services were not consulted prior to the Sarnia Jail closure announcement, and if closed, Sarnia would become the busiest border crossing in Ontario without a jail;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the" McGuinty-Wynne "Liberal government immediately conduct a public review of the Sarnia Jail and make that cost-benefit analysis available to the public prior to its closure."

I agree with this petition and will send it down with Brendan.

1350

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

Mr. Speaker, as I'm in agreement with this, I will affix my signature and give it to page Kelly.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Chedi.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition relates to a private member's bill that I had the honour of presenting and I look forward to having dealt with by the general government committee soon. It reads as follows:

"Whereas municipalities are required to produce official plans that are compliant with the Places to Grow Act and the provincial growth plan; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario prescribes population growth and intensification targets through the

provincial growth plan that must be met by municipalities; and

“Whereas even if the designated growth and intensification numbers are met, they are deemed to be minimum numbers; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board may approve densities to be located in areas not identified in the official plan, resulting in significant additional costs to the municipality because of required changes to long-term infrastructure plans, and also disrupts the character of existing communities;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

“(1) The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality’s official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space.

“(2) The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition and, of course, in support of the private member’s bill to which it refers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE SIKH

Mr. Singh moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month / Projet de loi 52, Loi proclamant le mois d’avril Mois du patrimoine sikh.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s with great honour and great pride that I rise today to address the House on this bill. For the House’s information, this would be the first permanent Sikh Heritage Month in all of Canada, so we would be making history here in Ontario, if enacted. This would be, again, the first ongoing celebration of the Sikh heritage, the contributions of Sikh Canadians in Ontario for the first time in Canada. So it’s quite historic, and I’m quite proud to rise and introduce this bill.

As we’re aware, the Sikh community represents a significant population within the South Asian community that have come to make Canada and Ontario their home. Sikh Canadians have been in Canada for over 100 years.

More than half of the new immigrants and new Canadians who settle in Canada make Ontario their home.

As a province, we celebrate a great number of communities, ethnicities and religions in the form of heritage months. These include Jewish Heritage Month, and Italian, Asian, Tamil, to name a few. I think it’s a great occasion for us to celebrate the contribution of Sikh Canadians, but I want to put it into a context of why it’s so important.

One of the things I said earlier today is that when we talk about celebrating the diversity of Ontario and the diversity of Canada, it provides us with an opportunity to do two things. One is, we celebrate the unique culture and value and principles of these various communities, but it also gives us a chance that, in celebrating diversity, we see the commonality that we all share. We see the common struggle and beliefs in shared values that we all have. So there’s a twofold purpose to celebrating diverse communities in our society.

The Sikh community has a particularly unique position in being such a visible community. With the visible principles of faith or articles of faith, Sikhs are quite visible. This can sometimes work in a negative manner for the Sikh community and there is still, despite the fact that Sikh Canadians have contributed so much to Ontario and Canada, the fact that they’re involved in all ranges of fields, including technical, skilled trades, science, medical, legal, entrepreneurial and political, as we can look around the House and see—that despite these contributions, despite the fact that Sikhs are active members of society, there’s still a significant amount of prejudice, there’s still a number of areas of systemic racism and barriers to access that Sikh Canadians face.

Very recently in the past year in my riding, there was a hate crime that impacted the Sikh Khalsa school in my community, and there was a YouTube video that went viral that talked about people who wear turbans as being terrorists. There is still a climate of hatred that exists in our society. There is still a negative and fearful climate that exists.

What I’ve said before, and what I truly believe, is that the breeding ground for hatred is ignorance. If we lack knowledge, if we’re not aware of another community, their values, what they believe in, if we don’t know about them, that is a breeding ground for fear and fear creates hatred.

To replace that, to get rid of that climate of hatred, I propose that we replace that climate of ignorance and lack of knowledge with understanding, with knowledge, and that will create a climate of compassion. People will start to feel for another one—if you understand them, you know where they’re coming from—and that can create what we want in our society, which is a climate of acceptance. We want everyone in our society to be accepted.

That’s why I think this Sikh Heritage Month is so important. It gives us a platform so that we can talk about the contributions that Sikh Canadians have made. We can talk about what they are about, their beliefs and values,

so that we can share in celebrating their diversity and create a society that is more accepting. It should be one of our goals as parliamentarians, to make sure we create a society that is accepting of all people, and this could be one step towards creating a more accepting society for Sikh Canadians.

I think about my childhood. I grew up in Windsor, and while Windsor is a beautiful community, it was a difficult time for a young boy with long hair and a funny-sounding name. I think of the Sikh Heritage Month as a way I can reach back in time and give my nine- or 10-year-old self a hug and say, "Listen, things will be better for you." We can create a society that's more accepting. So I'm hoping that the other little Jagmeets who are around Ontario and—my sister, her name's Manjot—the little Manjots who may have faced some racism at school or may have faced some difficult times, they can have this as a platform to share their values and their beliefs, and one of the beauties is that we have a lot of shared values.

Some of the essential principles of the Sikh faith I want to tell you about—people see Sikhs and they know about the five Ks, which are the five symbols or articles of faith, but I want to talk to you a little bit about some of the principles and values that we all share and some of the deep philosophical ideas that are actually Sikh values but are shared values as Canadians.

1400

One of our concepts in the Sikh faith is this idea of equality, but our principle of equality is much deeper than just the fact that we are all equal. In the Sikh context, our differences—our bodies, what we look like—are just an illusion. Our differences are an illusion and underneath our differences there is a common energy that we all share, and that common energy lives and exists within us and within all society. So when we talk about equality, we're saying that really the differences between us are an illusion, and we can celebrate our diversity, but underneath those differences is the reality that we are all one and we are connected. We share a connection—we share the same planet, the same life, the same world—and that's what we celebrate in terms of equality. It's a deep principle of equality founded on this principle that we're all really just the same energy in different forms.

One of the other principles in the Sikh spiritual tradition that's a hallmark of the Sikh faith is that while our goal as Sikhs is to reach a state of enlightenment where we tear down the barrier between our energy and all the energies around us—we call that tearing down the me and going towards we—our concept of "me" limits our ability to connect with the people around us. When we focus on the me, we lose the fact that we're all just people connected together on this planet. That is our spiritual goal, to reach enlightenment, but alongside that goal of reaching enlightenment and connecting all of us together is an obligation. As Sikhs, we have an obligation to struggle and work towards social justice for all.

Every day, when we complete our prayers, we talk about a concept of sarbat da bhallā, which means that we

wish wellness and success and happiness for all people on this earth and that it's one of our fundamental principles that we struggle every day in whatever way we can to create more social justice for all people. One of the essential founders of the Sikh faith used a symbol—the symbols of authority at that time were swords, and to convey the importance of both your spiritual life and your political life, he wore two swords. People asked him, "Why do you wear the two?" He said, "I want to convey the importance that in our lives we are going to commit ourselves to improving ourselves personally, but not only should we commit to performing duties and daily activities that improve us as human beings, we should also recognize that as human beings we have a duty, an obligation, to help out our fellow human beings, to help out our neighbours, to help out our society, to make our communities better. And it's not enough just to make an improvement in your own life, but you have to, as a social obligation, as a human being, contribute to the wellness of all people." That's a Sikh value. That's also a Canadian value, the idea that we want to make sure that everyone in our society does better, succeeds, feels better.

There are three pillars or fundamental aspects of the Sikh faith. We talk about naam japo, kirat kamao and vand keh chakko. The three ideas are that you meditate in your life to achieve that connection with all people, so meditation is important; the idea that you should earn your living through honest work and that we have a responsibility to share our resources with the people around us; the vand keh chakko—that's a Canadian value and, proudly, that's also an NDP value, the idea of sharing what we have with those around us, to make sure that it's not just about maintaining success and wealth for one person, but we're never going to succeed as a society until we uplift all people around us, until all of society improves. That makes a society that's truly fair and truly recognizes the inherent value of all human beings.

I want to share with you two greetings that we do in the Sikh community, and these greetings are said by many politicians when you attend an event. Often I've heard MPs and MPPs and city councillors share these greetings, but many people don't know what they mean, so I want to share with you what our day-to-day greetings mean. There are two forms of greetings. The one that people commonly use is "Sat sri akal," and what "Sat sri akal" means—it's a very interesting thing. When we talk to each other and we say "Hi," or you greet someone, "Good morning" or "Good evening," "Sat sri akal" is actually quite different. I'll break down the three words. "Sat" means truth or true; "sri" means respected or honoured, and "akal" means infinite. "Kal" means ending and "a" means not, so unending. So "Sat sri akal," when we meet someone, we're not saying "Good morning," "Good evening," "Good day," or "Hello"; we're saying, "Truth is that which is infinite," or "Truth is infinite," so that's the way we greet people, and when you get up and say "Sat sri akal" to the congregation in your communities or to the Sikh community, you're actually

saying "Truth is infinite." What a powerful idea to say, truth is infinite, or infinite is that which is true. That's a beautiful idea, and you say that every time when you say "Sat sri akal." I wanted to share that with you.

Another greeting often we hear people say is "Vaheguru ji ka khalsa; Vaheguru ji ke fateh." That is a very powerful greeting as well. Again, it's another greeting, and it's not a "Hello" or a "Good day" or "Good morning" or "Good evening." "Vaheguru" is the word for the universal energy, that which connects us and is around us and surrounds us. "Khalsa" is the word for sovereign: It depicts the idea we are all sovereign; we're all free as human beings. The idea is that as human beings, as sovereign people, as free people, we all belong to the energy that connects and binds us. "Fateh" is a word of success, and all success or all positivity or all goodness flows from the fact we are all, as sovereign, free human beings, connected and united by this energy all around us. That's what you say every time you greet a congregation.

I want to share that with you because that's a powerful message of the shared values we have as Canadians. We are free people, and we are entitled to our freedoms. We believe in protecting the rights of all people, and we believe that we are all connected in some way, in some form, that there is a connection that we all share.

These are Sikh values, but they're also Canadian values and Ontarian values. I'm very proud today that we can make this a month that is historic, a month that would be the first of its kind in Canada, and hopefully provinces across this country will follow with this idea so that we can have a society that is more accepting and we can combat some of the racism that sometimes exists.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in support of this motion recognizing the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month. Sikhs first settled in Canada more than a century ago, and they have contributed to the growth and development of our country. The Ontario Sikh community continues to play a vital role across this province. Just last night, I was in Brantford and met members of the community at an event. Sikh Canadians living in Ontario represent a growing and a dynamic population and have made significant contributions to the growth and the prosperity of Ontario.

One of the main principles of Sikhism is the value of volunteering, charity work and giving back to the needy. I see it full force in my community of Brampton–Springdale. From blood donation camps to hospital fundraisers to food banks like the Seva Food Bank in my community, the Sikh community is always taking the lead. The spirit of volunteerism and civic engagement has been passed on and embraced by the youth of the Sikh community.

This Sunday, members of the Sikh youth from the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation will be hosting a run-a-thon with world record holder and Olympic torchbearer Fauja Singh. The funds raised will be used to sponsor children in need all over the world. They've done this many years in a row.

People of Sikh descent play a significant role in my riding of Brampton–Springdale and, indeed, as I've mentioned, across Ontario, both economically and socially. As a former city councillor and now as a member of provincial Parliament, I've seen the community grow and mature over the years. I'm proud to have worked with them on a number of initiatives, and I'm honoured over the years that I have been able to build long friendships with many members of the Sikh faith.

April is an important month. It's in this month that Sikh Canadians celebrate Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa. Vaisakhi, also known as Khalsa Day, is celebrated across Ontario, from Windsor to Ottawa. Every year, I participate in Khalsa Day celebrations by walking alongside thousands of members of the Sikh community in the procession route. This year was a very special year. It was a unique year, as I was pleased to be joined by my colleagues from Mississauga East–Cooksville, Brampton West, and this year, for the first time, the Premier of Ontario. It marks the very first time in the event's history that the Premier joined the procession.

I believe that education and awareness are absolutely crucial to ensure that we work together to protect the vibrant, diverse and multicultural society that we all live in. By proclaiming the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Sikh Canadians make to Ontario's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.

Sikh Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, to celebrate and to educate future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important and valuable role that they have played and continue to play in communities across Ontario.

1410

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to congratulate the member from the NDP, my friend Mr. Singh, for bringing forward this bill today, Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month. Obviously, he knows what he's talking about. He's a member of that community. I've had the opportunity to get to know that community extremely well over the last several months as well.

I recall the first time I walked into a gurdwara. It was almost a year ago today. It was a hot summer day in early July. I have two little girls and a wife who's a high school teacher, so they were just starting their summer holidays. They thought, "What does daddy do in his new job as a politician at Queen's Park?" I said, "Well, why don't you come along with me?"

So we were doing a tour through the Brampton area. I took the entire family. Keep in mind we're from Prince Edward–Hastings and we have not one single gurdwara in Prince Edward–Hastings, although we do have a Sikh community in the area. I can tell you that it was an eye-opening experience not just for me but for my two little girls and my wife as well, the exposure to the Sikh religion and the Sikh culture that the member from

Bramalea–Gore–Malton explained just a few minutes ago.

In the almost two hours that I spent at this gurdwara in Brampton, my family and I were given an education into the tenets of the Sikh faith and the value of Sikh culture as well. We were welcomed in with open arms into this community. We had the opportunity to participate in their prayers and sample some food from the kitchen at the mission of the gurdwara as well. It was that afternoon that I learned that a hungry person in that community is always given a meal from the kitchen of a Sikh temple. They're open 24 hours a day and they're always there. It doesn't matter if you're a member of the Sikh community or if you're a member of Prince Edward–Hastings; if you need help, you can find help in a gurdwara.

In the year since that visit, I've had the opportunity to take in a lot more events through different interactions in the Sikh community here in the GTA in particular. A few weeks ago, recent census data indicated that our Sikh community, which is already a very sizable one in the province of Ontario, is only going to grow. It's going to continue to get bigger. Indeed, in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings we do have that small but growing Sikh community up in the Bancroft area, which is in cottage country. I would welcome any members of the Sikh community who want to get out of the gridlock of the GTA to come on up to North Hastings. We would gladly have you up in cottage country.

I had the opportunity to organize a buffet dinner at one of the local motels in Bancroft about three months ago. I was surprised how many members of the community were there. There were probably about 40, 50, maybe 60 members of the local Sikh community that came out to the event. I can tell you they occupy all kinds of different professions—veterinarians, chiropractors, accountants; they operate the local stores, the gas stations in the community. Every segment—it's very important in a rural community, because those rural communities are losing jobs, to have people coming into the community and fulfilling those jobs and providing those services that we need. So it was a great event and it was wonderful to meet all the people that live there in the Bancroft area. Again, I would encourage anybody who wants to get out of the rat race to join us in North Hastings.

Last fall, I had the chance to meet with much of the community during the celebration of Diwali here in the GTA. It's a community that has valued education. They've uprooted their families to a small community with a slower pace of life in order to pursue the education. As a result, Sikh bank tellers, engineers and students are now part of the community in a town of about 4,000 tucked into the Opeongo Hills in North Hastings.

Over the last year I've had the great pleasure to walk in the big Khalsa Day event here in Toronto. That was just an incredible experience—tens of thousands of people walking from the Exhibition grounds to Nathan Phillips Square to celebrate, and the food was pretty good too that day, I must say. As I say, we've celebrated Diwali, we've celebrated Vaisakhi, and I've had the op-

portunity to celebrate different birthdays and anniversaries on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus in the Sikh community as well.

We need Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario to recognize a community that has become an integral part of our identity as a province. I'm also very grateful for the teachings of the Sikh religion as they promote values that help create a positive, open, honest and compassionate society.

When I met with hundreds of members of the Sikh faith, one value they all shared was community service. In Punjabi, they call it seva: helping those that are in need; helping them get back up on their feet; helping them become productive members of our communities; helping them to rise to their potential. That's something that's very admirable about this community. This was one of their main principles that various Sikh gurus have taught, whether it was Guru Nanak Dev Ji or Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

By proclaiming April as Sikh Heritage Month, we'll also be educating our communities about not only the contributions that the Sikh community has made but what it means to be Sikh. Over the last decade, Sikhs have been targeted for their differences, whether it's vandalism in their schools or the tragic shootings that took place in Wisconsin. By educating, we can overcome these differences, as the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton mentioned near the end of his remarks on this bill that he's presented today.

I've come to know the Sikh community, and they're peaceful, hard-working individuals. They want to create a better life for their children, as we all do. We need to put an end to the discrimination; we need to put an end to hate-fuelled attacks.

I'm proud to stand here today as an Ontario PC MPP and support the bill put forward by Mr. Singh. Sat sri akal—truth is infinite. All the best, and we support you wholeheartedly with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure, actually, to stand in this House on this day in support of the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He is indeed a champion of social justice and, indeed, access to justice for all.

Sikh Heritage Month offers us all an opportunity to remember, to celebrate and to educate future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important role they have played and continue to play in communities across Ontario, in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo and every other riding in this province.

I would like to share with you an example of a contribution that a Sikh man made to Ontario and to Canada. On November 4 last year, I attended the Sikh Remembrance Day in Kitchener; this was the fifth anniversary of the event, which began after the grave of Buckam Singh was discovered in Mount Hope Cemetery in Kitchener in 2007. Private Buckam Singh's grave in Kitchener is the only known World War I Sikh Canadian soldier's grave in Canada.

Private Singh came to Canada from Punjab in 1907 at the age of 14. He volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the spring of 1915. He's one of the earliest known Sikhs living in Ontario at the time, as well as one of only nine Sikhs that we know of that served with the Canadian troops in World War I.

Private Singh served with the 20th Canadian Infantry Battalion in the battlefields of Flanders in 1916. He was wounded twice in two separate battles. He received treatment at a hospital run by one of Canada's most famous soldiers, poet and doctor Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae.

I would like to read into the record the news of his first wounding, as it was reported on August 9, 1916, in the *Toronto Daily Star*:

"Private [Buckam] Singh, the first Sikh to enlist with an Ontario battalion, has been twice wounded since he went to the front. He was engaged as a farmhand for W.H. Moore of Rosebank, Ontario, when the call came for active service. He was reported injured for the first time two months ago. His name appears among the wounded in today's list. Bukum Singh came to Canada from Punjab in 1907. After mining in British Columbia, he came to Toronto about two years ago. He went overseas with a Kingston battalion."

While recovering from his wounds, Private Singh contracted tuberculosis and spent his final days in a military hospital in Kitchener, dying at the age of 25 in 1919. He never got to see his family again and he died, forgotten, almost 90 years ago.

It is not well known that Sikh Canadians served with the Canadian army in the First World War. Ten such men have been found among the military records of the Great War—all volunteers to fight for a country that denied them the rights of citizenship.

That is worth reiterating: These men gave their lives for a country that at the time still denied them the rights of citizenship.

Thankfully, Private Singh's heroic story is now being reclaimed and celebrated at events like Sikh Remembrance Day in Kitchener, organized by Sikh communities across Ontario.

It's very powerful to be in this House and to be able to relate that story on this day.

Sikh Heritage Month should be added to the list of heritage months already celebrated in Ontario—to name a few: Jewish, Italian, Asian and Tamil. These months are important for the opportunities they provide for the entire province to recognize the contributions of those significant communities to our collective experience as Ontarians.

1420

Michael Tibollo, president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, said this about Italian Heritage Month, celebrated each June: "Canadians of Italian heritage are but one strand of the Canadian mosaic and together with the others, weave the very fabric of who we are."

I believe the fabric of who we are binds us and we should take the time to acknowledge each strand.

It's actually very difficult for me not to think of the importance and the weight of Sikh Heritage Month inside the education system and what the potential of that could be. You know, it's quite powerful to hear the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton talk about his own experience growing up in Windsor and what he experienced in that community and how far we've come but how far we still need to go. Indeed, in the education system, the potential and power of that system is that we can grow our understanding and we can grow our compassion, because I hope we all agree that we need to aim at more than tolerance to truly be a strong community.

Certainly—and this is what I've said all along, throughout the years in the education system—each month you take an opportunity to honour the people who are actually in your community. Sikh Heritage Month would indeed provide an opportunity to do that.

I'd also just like to quickly mention the important principles of Sikhism that are surely worth reflecting on.

Equality: Sikhism is one of the few spiritual faiths that extol absolute spiritual and social equality in terms of practice and leadership within a spiritual context or a social context.

Responsibility for social justice: Sikhs are obligated, in addition to the pursuit of spiritual improvement of Sikhs, to work for the betterment of all humankind.

As a New Democrat, these are values we're thinking about, not just for one month, but every single day.

We have to remember that Ontario encompasses over 100 ethnic cultures, represented within a province of over 13 million people. More than half of all new Canadians settle in Ontario and contribute to the richness of Ontario's culture. Every member of this Legislature has a Sikh community that should be recognized each April.

I hope this entire Legislature will support Sikh Heritage Month, the first of its kind in Canada. Let us lead, not follow, because our diversity is indeed our strength.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to share my thoughts on Canadian Sikh heritage.

First of all, I would like to recognize my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his initiative in bringing forward Bill 52, the Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013. As the first South Asian and Sikh woman elected to the Ontario Parliament, I'm proud to support Bill 52.

The first Sikh set his foot on Canadian soil in about 1889. Today, there are more than 450,000 Sikhs in Canada, and about 175,000 of them have made Ontario their home. The Sikhs have toiled, along with other Canadians, building railways and working on farms and in mines and sawmills, ushering in a modern Canada. The contributions made by Sikhs to Ontario's economic, political, social and culture fabric are significant.

On April 13, 1699, known today as Vaisakhi Day, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs proclaimed the Panth Khalsa, baptized Sikhs. The holy book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth*, teaches a healthy way of life and incorporates

many liberal values, such as equality, tolerance, fairness, justice for all, respect for difference, protection of the persecuted, and a caring, compassionate and inclusive society.

Our government also shares many of those values and believes in dignity, peace and prosperity for all Ontarians. For example, our government tabled a budget, which is being debated in this House. The budget aspires to create a prosperous and fair Ontario, and it contains provisions that will give more dignity to the poor and ensure prosperity for all through job creation and other initiatives. I hope the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and his party will vote in favour of the budget and avoid an expensive \$92-million election, which Ontarians do not want.

The designation of April as Sikh Heritage Month will give an opportunity to all to celebrate with Sikh Ontarians their religious and cultural values, and further educate our future generations about the important role the Sikhs have played and will continue to play in enriching our great province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a distinct honour to stand and speak to this act, to Bill 52. It's not often we get a chance to stand in the Legislature and speak in commonality with one another, with all three parties. This is something that, certainly, we are able to stand in unity in support of. Thank you to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for bringing it forward.

I had the distinct honour and privilege of living overseas for several years. I'm fully aware of what it takes to pick up, move somewhere else and start to learn a different culture, to try to become a part of it and to try to be accepted, even though you're different. Many of us who were born and raised here often forget that when we go somewhere else, we are that different culture. The whole world isn't like what we see, especially in this bubble or in this city or even the cities that we all represent. Any opportunity that we have to learn about each other's culture is fantastic.

I also want to say, and be clear, that we are lucky that we live in a place that allows us to stand and talk about our differences and actually celebrate the differences that we have, and realize that despite some of those differences, the important things are what we really have in common. Although we may have different paths to get to one spot, I think that one spot is what we do all have in common. It's that we need to trust each other, respect each other, have more than tolerance for each other, but moreover help each other, help each other achieve all the things we need to achieve in life. The important things, like getting fed, having a home to live in, living in peace and living in a culture that allows us to live in absolute peace without discrimination against us despite our race, religion, culture, creed, sexual orientation—any of those things—we all have those basic human rights and we are very lucky to live in a place like Canada and Ontario where we are free to exercise all of those things. It

shouldn't go without saying that we are lucky that we have this opportunity to stand here and actually talk about having a day like this for Sikh heritage.

We need to talk about some of the things that the Sikh faith and culture has brought to us in Ontario. It's brought a lot of prosperity; it's brought a lot of caring; it's brought a lot of lessons.

I had the pleasure of going to a gurdwara in Scarborough for the first time. I was really surprised—and maybe I'm ashamed to say I was surprised at this—at the warmth that I was shown and the generosity that I was shown. I really, really enjoyed being there and learning more about this culture, the warmth and the tolerance they showed towards me and some of my ignorance that I had towards some of their cultural aspects. Admittedly, when I walked in, I was little bit intimidated at first, with all the different rules and cultural things that I had to learn so quickly. But the patience that they showed me and the tolerance that they showed me is something that I think we all need to show back.

This bill is a great reminder of how we can show our respect for the Sikh culture and religion for what they've given to Ontario, and give that back and work in unison so we can have a better Ontario and better communities altogether.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: Welcome to all of our guests in the audience today who are here to witness this debate and hopefully the passage at second reading of this bill.

I have a long history of experience with the Sikh people, going back to my time when I worked in the immigration department of Canada. Over those years, a great many people came from India, and most of them in those years were Sikhs.

I learned a lot about the religion, about the culture, because I got to witness it each and every day. We learned about Guru Nanak, the first of the 10 gurus. We learned about the founding of the Khalsa, about the pure. We learned about the beliefs that Sikhs have in terms of their religion; God, known as Naam. We learned that Naam is ineffable and one. We learned about the centre of Sikhism at the holy shrine in Amritsar and watched in some horror over the years when it was invaded. We watched some of the things that happened to Sikhs in India following the death of the Prime Minister. We watched some of the riots. We watched as Sikhs, in even greater numbers, attempted to leave India and find some peace and tranquility here in Canada.

The Sikhs, indeed, have had a very turbulent history over a very short period of time. Sikhism is one of the newest religions on earth; it's only 400 or 500 years old. In that period, it has been misunderstood, not only in Canada, but even in India. It has been misunderstood by people who saw the Sikhs as somehow being different, even though it may have been originally an offshoot, sort of a combination of the ideals and thoughts of two other great religions, of Hinduism and Islam.

But the Sikhs developed something absolutely unique in their religion. What that uniqueness was, was equality—equality in a place like India, which had the caste system at the time, where people were born into a system and could never escape that system. Sikhism gave the first opportunity to treat everyone as exactly the same.

Many Sikhs, like my friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, use the last name Singh. I know that others use a sub-caste name because in immigration we used to ask for those as well. But Singh means lion; it means that strong, male person. They use that name, and he uses that name, with some considerable pride.

Sikhs have lived in Canada for a long time, and I heard my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about a soldier in the First World War. But Sikhs were not always welcome in this country. In immigration, they taught us about the voyage of a ship, called the Komagata Maru, which left India with a boatload of Sikh migrants who came and tried to get off the boat in Vancouver. They thought they would be welcomed, because Canada at that time was open to any British person. Anyone who was a member of the British Empire could literally come and live in Canada. There were no immigration rules in those days; in fact, Canada didn't have an immigration act for some considerable time after that period. They came, and they were not allowed off the boat. They sat in that harbour for weeks or months, trying to get access into Canada, into a land that should have welcomed them, but which did not. In the end, they were forced to sail away and back to India, from whence they had come.

It is a lesson to all of us, and we have witnessed it before with other peoples and other cultures that we did not know well. We have witnessed it with the Chinese, with the head tax to make sure that there was an impediment put upon them so they couldn't bring their families. We learned it with the Sikhs, even though they were British subjects. We learned it with the Jews later on, just prior to the Second World War. Canada, to its shame, did those things. But to Canada's credit, we recognize them today. We recognize them as having been wrong.

From the early 1970s until this point, large numbers of Sikhs have come to Ontario. They have taught us all about equality, selfless service and love of humanity.

As some of my colleagues have said, when you go to a gurdwara, you actually experience equality. At most, but not all, of the gurdwaras I have been to, there are no chairs. Everybody sits on the floor. Everybody is at the same height. Everybody is treated at the same level. Everybody is given the same food. Everybody is respected in exactly the same way. Whether you are a Sikh or whether you are someone like me who goes there, you are treated in such an excellent fashion.

We need to recognize Sikh Heritage Month. We need to tell people of Sikh heritage that they are welcome in this country, that we recognize their contributions and that this country is theirs too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure and an honour to rise in the Ontario Legislature and speak to Bill 52, which would proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

I, too, have a story to share. I came to Canada in the mid-1970s. I wore a turban, but I was the only student at my school who had a turban. Becoming accepted as someone who had a turban was quite difficult. It created quite a few problems, because students didn't know what this thing was that was on top of my head.

My family had no choice, literally, at that time but to have my hair cut. But all that has changed. I'm happy to report and see, like many of my other colleagues, that we have come a long way. Like a lot of you, we visit schools. I know that in my riding of Brampton West, when I go to schools, I see many young students who are the same age as I was when I came to Canada wearing a turban. That's nice to see, as it shows that we've come a long way in tolerance and acceptance.

The other example that sticks out in my mind is that prior to 1989—I can remember the time, because I was going to university at that time—turbaned Sikhs were not allowed in our Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I remember the fellow—his last name was the same as mine—Baltej Singh Dhillon. He was battling to become a constable in the RCMP, and it took quite a few challenges in the courts to finally have that issue resolved.

I'm very happy to tell the Legislature, as many of you probably know, that most of our police forces now—the metro police, the Peel Regional Police—have many turbaned Sikhs, because the turban, it was proven, was not a hindrance to their ability to carry out their duties as a police officer. As a matter of fact, the Peel Regional Police use a picture of one of their turbaned police officers on their promotional material to reach out to ethnic communities in their recruitment drives. That's really good to see.

I'm really proud, as a Sikh, to say that our community has come a long way. There is still much more that can be done. The community is assimilating into our Canadian and Ontario society quite well. What I mean to say by that is that the community has gotten so much, and I feel so honoured to call Ontario and Canada my home because I have gotten so much—me and my family and my Sikh community—and the community is giving back.

A couple of years ago, Brampton Civic Hospital opened up. I remember that on one of the Punjabi radio shows, in less than an hour and a half, the community raised over \$1 million for the hospital. The hospital has a—I don't know which wing it is, but it's named after our first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, so that's very nice to see. As a matter of fact, when I walk in the hospital, I see many rooms for which families have paid a big sum of money to have rooms named after their loved ones who may have passed away or their loved ones who might have gotten care at the hospital. It's an excellent signal of giving back.

1440

As well, many of my colleagues spoke about Seva Food Bank. "Seva" means "service." It's such a tre-

mendous organization, and I want to give a shout-out to Kulvir Gill, who single-handedly started this wonderful organization which does many food drives throughout the year. As a matter of fact, I'll be having my 10th annual barbecue this summer, and every year since Seva has started up, all I ask from people who attend is if they can bring a food item so we can donate to Seva. Because it's not just the Sikh community that benefits from it; it's all the people who live in the Mississauga and Brampton area who use the Seva Food Bank who benefit from it. That's a really, really great cause.

As well, I'm very proud of the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation, again an excellent, excellent way of showing that the Sikh community is part of the broader community, where the kids do marathons—many, many fundraising drives to help children in need. Again, these aren't necessarily Sikh children or Indian children. They find different projects that they want to support and they get a huge amount of goodwill and support from the Sikh community. I'm very proud of them.

As well, I want to give a shout-out to a good friend of mine, Prabhjot Dhanoa, who is a pharmacist and a businessman. He, many years ago, signed up to be a reservist in our Canadian army. He's encouraged, and has been a role model for, other Sikhs to do the same. What he's trying to do is show, "I've gotten everything that I have in this world because of Canada and Ontario. This is a little way of giving back." I believe it goes very far in becoming accepted into this great land.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to thank formally Mr. Singh, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. He has done much to educate we members who are ignorant of what he brings to this Legislature. In fact, this issue today is really about educating us.

I want to thank our member from Prince Edward-Hastings, who has gone out of his way to embrace, understand and appreciate, and eliminate ignorance of, a group within our community. I welcome members of the Sikh community here today as well.

Really, this bill—and I did have a look at it and I've had a couple of letters on it. I do have members of the Sikh community in my family. The bill explains pretty much what we should learn from today's debate. It says, "... Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith. Sikh Canadians widely celebrate Vaisakhi, also known as Khalsa Day, across Ontario." It speaks to the idea of educating future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important role they play.

Even in his remarks, in everything he does here, sort of embracing the issues that all of us as constituent members face, says a lot. And his greeting that he said towards the end of his remarks, "Sat sri akal", which he went on to say says more than just "Hello"; it's really talking about celebrating the freedom of people, the energy and the protection of rights, as well as we're all

sort of connected in the human journey—which I don't think anyone here could find fault with.

Where the barriers are is, in fact, the ignorance. Debating these things within the Legislature and giving voice to the differences encourages understanding and therefore acceptance. Mr. Dhillon's remarks do remind me of how far we in the past, through ignorance, misunderstood some of the symbols and rituals of each other's cultures.

I appreciate very much what you said this afternoon. I would be supportive of the bill. Thank you for bringing it here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to welcome some of the supporters here from my riding and from across Ontario.

I got a little emotional when I was concluding my remarks because I was thinking about what this means, and what this could mean, for many people across Ontario, and particularly a lot of young people. I know it's difficult to be different and it's difficult to fit in, and that difference and that difficulty are based on the fact that people don't know why you're different and why you look the way you do. Hearing so many people share their stories from their ridings, from their communities, about what they have learned from the Sikh community has made me feel a lot of encouragement, a lot of confidence that we can improve as a society and we can move towards a society that will accept all people. Hearing the stories from each and every one of you has touched me, and I know it has touched the people listening today. It means a lot, because the reality is that there is still a lot of racism; there's a lot of difficulty that people face.

I grew up in Windsor, like I said, and I can tell you just very briefly that it was a rough childhood. Being a kid who looked different, having a funny-sounding name, and having a turban and a beard was tough. All of you sharing your stories and sharing your support means a lot, because there are other young children out there who want to embrace their community and embrace their culture, and sometimes feel it is difficult to do so. Having a platform where we can talk about the values of what the Sikh community and principles are about, the fact that we stand for equality for all and we want social justice and to improve the lives of all people, that we believe that every human being is sovereign and free by their birth, that we have gone through a lot of struggles as the Sikh community—genocide, oppression, misunderstandings—and to be here today, the first turbaned Sikh in the Ontario Legislature, the first Sikh to graduate from Osgoode Hall Law School, shows that we can break these barriers.

I'm going to ask for your indulgence. This is the chant of victory: Bolay so nihal!

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): For those in the audience, we will take the vote at the end of regular business.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a select committee should be established immediately to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians; and

That in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following issues: the urgent need for a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness, and to coordinate the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries in addition to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, taking into consideration the following:

- the elementary and secondary school educational needs of children and youth;

- the educational and workplace needs of youth upon completion of secondary school;

- the need to provide social, recreational and inclusive opportunities for children, youth and adults;

- the need for a range of available and affordable housing options for youth and adults;

- the respite and support needs of families;

- how government should most appropriately support these needs and provide these opportunities.

That the committee shall have the authority to conduct hearings and undertake research, and generally shall have such powers and duties as are required to develop recommendations on a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness; and

That the committee shall present an interim report to the House no later than October 31, 2013, and a final report no later than April 30, 2014.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 29. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution this afternoon. As you will know, this is the second time I've introduced this resolution in the House, the first time being September 20, 2012, when it was unanimously passed. Unfortunately, that ended with prorogation, and so I'm bringing it forward today. It's my sincere hope that it will again be approved unanimously, and I have received indications that it likely will, because the issues that the committee is addressing are serious and pressing.

We have many guests in our galleries today, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, and I'm extremely grateful for the people who have provided support to me in bringing this resolution forward. People who are watching today in their homes, thank you for your support as well. I know that you're counting on all of us to do the right

things, that you need our help as legislators, you need us to develop a strategy for the some 100,000 to 200,000 people in Ontario who are living with an intellectual challenge or who are dually diagnosed with both an intellectual disability and a mental illness.

1450

We need to remember the individuals, of course, but we also need to remember their caregivers, who need support so that they in turn they can continue to provide care to their loved ones. If there was ever a question whether action needed to be taken in this sector, Mr. Speaker, it became painfully clear several weeks ago when an Ottawa family, the Telfords, were forced to leave their 19-year-old son at a developmental services office because they were no longer able to provide care for him and keep him safe. Mrs. Telford's son Philippe has autism and functions at the level of a two-year-old. He also has Tourette's syndrome and insulin-dependent diabetes. Mrs. Telford and her husband had begged for help and had been sitting on wait-lists for a number of years, but nothing was happening; there was no success in this regard. Absolutely desperate and overwhelmed, they concluded they had no option but to give their son over to the government in order to get him the services that he needed and in order to keep him safe.

I think that's something all of us as parents in this Legislature consider to be unimaginable, to feel so desperate that you would have to give up your child in order to give them the care that they need. But unfortunately, families across Ontario are contemplating the same scenario today because they feel that there's no one listening and there are no supports out there to help them.

Laurie Mawlam, who is the executive director of Autism Canada, is aware of how many families are supporting children with autism and intellectual challenges who are struggling desperately. She's noted, and I think all of us as members in this House have also heard, that support services disappear for their children when they reach age 19 or when they finish high school at age 21. As Ms. Mawlam states, "It's every parent's nightmare—what's going to happen as they age and can no longer care for their children?"

I'd like to take a moment to read a statement from Judy, a member of our Durham region community who has a 21-year-old son with autism. Judy's statement clearly articulates the concerns that she has as a parent.

"My son turns 21 next week. And he'll be out of school in the middle of June—for good.

"[My son] is autistic, with very little functional speech and challenging behaviours. He requires constant care.

"He's been in a segregated classroom since he was 10—with six students, one teacher and four teaching assistants.

"[My son]'s a big guy now, six foot two inches, 190 pounds. And although he's actually quite gentle when he's getting his own way, he can be quite intimidating and difficult when he's not.

"During the first 10 years of his life, we spent mortgages chasing therapies and treatments.

"In the last 10 years, life took on a bit of a routine getting him off to school in the morning, arranging care for the four-hour spread between when he got home from school and when I got home from work.

"When school is done, his life will get very small very quickly.

"There are no post-secondary options and there are [no] vocational or volunteer positions that he could manage. There are no spots in existing day programs.

"He's on a number of wait-lists, but there's no guarantee that he'll ever get in and no assumption that a placement would work out if he did. Without an environment of intuitive, informed supporters, his behaviours escalate.

"It's an isolated existence with very few options for us.

"I've watched relationships with friends and family dwindle under the weight of autism. There are places we can't go and things (most things, really) that we can't do socially, so it's tough to contribute to a friendship.

"We can go to the park so he can play on the swings for an hour or two. But while we're there, I'm sitting by myself and he's by himself.

"So here's how the future looks, come June.

"If I work full-time, I'll need to pay caregivers 10 hours every workday. Even at today's minimum wage, that's nearly \$40,000 in care expense every year until I retire.

"Or I guess I can quit working to care for him, but then we'd both become dependent on social assistance.

"Or I can deliver his care to the public trustee, where cost to provide 24-hour care triples.

"Most importantly, I don't know what that would mean for his quality of life. And my own guilt and despair might actually drown me.

"I love my son. I want only happiness for him.

"They say it takes a village.

"You are our village.

"We need help; we need a solution."

Currently there are over 12,000 Ontarians with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed who are waiting for a residential placement. Many have been on the wait-list for a number of years because there are simply no openings.

But housing isn't the only concern for families, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of other issues in the developmental sector that require supports, in addition to a lack of residential placements.

Many concerns have been expressed about a lack of community supports and services to allow young people to participate fully in our communities. A recent letter from the Thames Valley District School Board dated February 13, 2013, addressed to the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Education clearly outlines these concerns, and I'd like to quote a bit from this letter as well.

"Dear Ministers:

"The Thames Valley District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and board of trustees are concerned about the transition from school to

adult services for students with developmental disabilities. In particular, we are concerned that there is confusion about the Development Services of Ontario agency (DSO) process and that funding of services for people with developmental disabilities is inadequate. We agree with many of the issues raised by colleagues across the province. Inter-ministry and inter-agency co-operation in creating transitions which help individuals and families move seamlessly between children's and adult services is imperative.

"There is a great deal of confusion about the transition process concerning how families, caregivers, guardians and individuals will learn about DSO, when families should initiate application process and what documentation or assessments are required. Families continue to report that processes are inconsistent and the criteria remains unclear."

Again, moving forward, "The bigger concern shared by families and the Thames Valley District School Board is that funding for adult services is inadequate and many young people face years of waiting for services and supports when they turn 18 years of age or leave school. The gap is exacerbated for individuals who turn 18 years of age and are no longer eligible for special services at home (SSAH) funding. As these individuals age out of school, the need for access to community opportunities and service is far greater.

"The Thames Valley District School Board has approximately 1,000 students aged 16 to 20 who are enrolled and who have been identified as having a developmental disabilities exceptionality. Some of these students may be moving to employment or post-secondary education with varying support needs, but the majority will require significant supports to be able to live and participate in the community, to be employed or to enjoy volunteer opportunities.

"The families of these young people are very concerned about the transition out of school and about what supports will be available. For some students with high needs or requiring constant supervision, their future is very bleak. Some families may have to reduce or end their employment to stay home and provide care, and those individuals who don't have family supports in place are in even more precarious life situations as they age out of children's services."

The letter goes on to speak about the investigation that's being conducted by the Ombudsman. Certainly, that's very welcome; the Ombudsman, as I understand it, has heard from over 730 families. But I still believe that a select committee is necessary in order to explore some of those areas where the Ombudsman perhaps doesn't have jurisdiction, and also to suggest some solutions to get us out of this situation. The good news is that there are some very interesting and innovative proposals that are out there, and some operations are already in place to assist people in this respect.

The other good news is that many of these programs could be rolled out across Ontario at a relatively modest cost, so I would like to spend the very few minutes

remaining to me just speaking about some of these innovative programs and how it's something that I believe we might take a look at in the committee if it's established.

I've had the chance to visit a number of service providers across the province, and there are some great ones out there. At the risk of being exclusive, I will mention one in particular, and that's a program that's being operated by Community Living Peterborough—the Minister of Rural Affairs is probably quite familiar with it. It's led by a team led by Jack Gillan, and they have a number of housing programs in place where both seniors and also groups of young people are living as independently as possible.

I can tell you only that the sense of home and pride of place in these homes is something to behold. Even as the surroundings are beautiful, comfortable and warm, people are proud to show you their homes, and that's what I think we need to look at, to establish that kind of scenario for people across the province of Ontario.

1500

We also need to take a look at educational workplace opportunities. I'm very pleased to say that there are a number of community colleges across Ontario—including my own community college in my area, Durham College, that has rolled out a program called CICE, Community Integration through Co-operative Education—where students with intellectual disabilities, a small number of them, are placed in the college every year. They can study a program of their choice. It's modified so they'll be successful. When they graduate they get a CICE diploma and job skills. They are employable; they want to work. Some can't, but a lot of them can and want to.

On the other hand of the equation, we need to take a look at employers, educating employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. I know that action has been taken on both the federal and provincial levels. Federally, there has been a report called *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector: We All Have Abilities; Some Are Just More Apparent Than Others*. I understand there's also some work that's being done at the provincial level, with our Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Onley, taking the lead.

I would like to go on, if I could add one more thing. Ultimately, the idea for this committee is to assist us in making a society that is truly inclusionary, where everyone's abilities are celebrated, where everyone has a place. That's why I'm sincerely hopeful that we will be able to move this forward into committee and that we will be able to work together to help all of the people who need our help in this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to stand and to speak to this bill, put forth by my friend in the Progressive Conservative Party from Whitby—Oshawa. We were on Evan Solomon's show, *Power and Politics*, when the tragic case of the Telford family broke into the news,

speaking about the complete inadequacy of our system in dealing with folk who have to deal with members of their family who have severe disabilities. Truly, if there is one plea that goes out of this House this day, it is this: Do something. Move forward in some way.

I absolutely support the member's bill. We will be voting for it. There's no issue there, although I have to say, there was a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions on which the member herself sat, and our health critic sat as well. They came up with some 23—I think it was—recommendations. Let me tell you what that committee did. They were struck, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions; they worked for 18 months, 30 days of hearings, 230 presenters, 300 submissions—all-party, remember, on this—and came up with a number of excellent recommendations, upon which everyone agreed, and it now sits collecting dust on a shelf, except for three of those recommendations.

I guess what I'm saying is the caveat: I want to see this move forward, but if the government is not going to work on the recommendations that this committee comes up with, then it will be a great deal of time wasted, a great deal of money wasted for naught. Really, I'm appealing to our Liberal government that if this is passed—and I hope that it will be—that when this committee is struck—and I hope that it will be—the recommendations from such a committee will actually be put into effect. On the record: just saying that.

Let's talk about the background a little bit of where we are in this province on this file. Many people don't realize, who aren't dealing with this, that there was a huge upheaval in the last year. Special Services at Home, a program that used to provide service to children and adults, as of April 2012 only provides services to children. Hence, there's a massive wait-list at the transition point: 8,500 children on the wait-list versus the 13,000 receiving service. Currently, almost 14,000 adults with developmental disabilities are receiving care under the SSAH, with 300 on the wait-list.

Passport: I'm very familiar with that; a program for adults that transfers funding directly to them or their families. It currently serves around 4,000, but there are more than 4,500 families on the wait-list. You would have to double the capacity just to eliminate the wait-list. There are 2,700 people who've had their eligibility for developmental services confirmed and an additional 2,500 who are currently being assessed for services.

When we look at residential services, the numbers just get worse. Today, there are just 17,500 people served in five different forms of accommodation. Let's just sum it all up. Community Living says it best. They say, "Nearly 23,000 people are languishing on waiting lists. Decades of chronic underfunding of the developmental services sector is placing in peril children and adults who have an intellectual disability, their families and the agencies that support them." That's 23,000. That's black; that's sad. Those are real lives. Those are people like the Telfords, every single one of them.

I remember very well in the last sitting of this Legislature bringing in a family from my riding, the Patersons. I

think they came in five times. They sat through five question periods. Five times I asked the minister of the day—Meilleur, she was at that time—“Do something. Help this family.” Eventually they got help. Can we do that for every one of the 23,000? No, we cannot. Something systemic has to change; something systemic has to be done to address this.

And it's only going to get worse because over 50—here's more stats, scary ones: 1,450 parents over the age of 70 are still providing primary care to their adult child or family member; 80% of those parents are between 70 to 79 years of age; 17% of the parents are between 80 to 89 years of age, and 3% of the parents are over the age of 90. What is going to happen to their family members when the inevitable happens to them? Are we prepared for this? As we age as a community, this figure will only go up, again, unless something systemic, something dramatic is done. I know, for example, that 30% of our agencies that deal with folk who have a disability are in permanent deficits right now. So again, the answer has to be pretty serious and pretty systemic.

My friend's bill is a start, but again it's the start. The recommendations that would emerge from this would have a dollar figure attached to them, one hopes, one suspects, one can predict. Will this government have the backbone to step up to the plate and do what's necessary?

We were talking about the workers and the programs that train the workers. The actual reality right now is that enrolment in college programs that train people to provide support in this sector is dropping and some programs have been suspended. Why? Because the pay is so low, because there's not enough money in the sector to encourage people to take this up as a living.

I just want to give you an example of another jurisdiction that does things way better. My husband and I travelled to Sweden. That's as close to heaven as it gets for a social democrat. We met with people across the political spectrum in Sweden, and one of them raised this issue. They had a very novel program. It didn't work for everybody. It worked for a significant number of families, however, and that is, families who had a member who had a disability that was going to require constant care could go and be trained at the state's expense, become part of a union—they were unionized and therefore supervised, so there was some supervision of what happened in the homes—and then go back into their homes and look after their members for a union salary. They said it was cheaper than institutionalization. It was cheaper than the programs that they were running before, and their whole move, like ours in some ways, has been to deinstitutionalize, move away from that and move into providing care in flexible ways. Now, it didn't work for everybody. Not everybody has a relative who wants to do that, but in fact they said most did. It's still less expensive and one could argue more humane, and they did not have these kinds of figures. They didn't have these kinds of waiting lists. They were dealing. If Sweden, a community smaller than Ontario, with nine million people, can afford to do that, we can too.

1510

I point to why we should do it: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 27 states that signing countries—we are one—will recognize the rights of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability.

One can only ask: Are we living up to that in Ontario? The answer is an unequivocal no. We are not. We are in breach of that decision made at the UN. Despite the fact that our country has signed on to that, in this province we are in breach of living up to that.

The Ontario Disability Support Program: We saw some modest increases to that program in the budget, and for that we applaud the government. However, if you look at the long term for people who are living on ODSP, here's what you find: Since 1993, those who live on ODSP are living on—this is of course comparing to inflation—18% lower supports than they were in 1993. We are asking people with disabilities to live in poverty for their entire lives. That's in essence what we're saying: “You're going to live in poverty for your entire life.”

I had a call, after the budget was tabled, from one of my constituents. He had seen the budget. He suffers from many disabilities—they're not cognitive disabilities. He said, “I see that there's a 1% increase on ODSP.” I said, “Yes.” And he said, “Well, my rent just went up 2.5%.” He said, “I see that I can keep \$200 more of the money I earn or receive, but I cannot work; I can't leave the house,” in his case, “so I'm not going to be eligible for that.” So I ask you: What have we done for him?

This is so systemic; it's such a problem—\$42 million that has been allocated in the budget would represent about 14% of the waiting list. So, again, it's not the answer, obviously. It's better than nothing. I'm not complaining. It's better than nothing, but not the answer.

The reason we need to support this bill is that we do need some answers. We need to look at this area systemically. We need to look at how we can fix it, not just by throwing money at it over here, and not just by tinkering with the system over there, but actually look at something that might work for the vast majority of folk, and to make it happen. Not only do the economics of the situation demand it but, my goodness, our very souls, our ethics, our morals and our ability to call ourselves human demand it. Before another Telford case happens, before another family is injured in that way and before another child suffers, it is incumbent upon us to do something. This is the beginning of that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to begin by thanking the honourable member opposite for her motion. There are few people in this Legislative Assembly for whom I have more respect than the member opposite, so thank you.

What I'm particularly pleased about is the member opposite's history of doing good things. The standing committee on mental health was a great example of that—I think everyone would agree with that initiative—and her inclination to point direction rather than fingers, I think, is helpful.

The developmental services sector has a long history over several governments, but I'm not going to go there today. I'm going to speak more to the high ground of where we can go. Every year more children with developmental disabilities become adults and look to the adult developmental services system for support. More and more elderly parents caring for children at home are having increased difficulties coping. I've been the Minister of Community and Social Services for three months. It has been a roller-coaster ride, I can tell you, particularly as we prepare for a budget and try to fight as best we can to get allocations for the folk that we're most concerned about.

I certainly understand, based on a number of conversations that I've been privileged to have with groups, for which I would say there's a shared sense of purpose on some of these issues. Over the last three months, I have had a chance to meet with:

- a couple of school boards, including my own Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board;

- the ODSP Action Coalition;

- the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth;

- People First Ontario, a self-advocacy group run by and for people with developmental disabilities;

- Christian Horizons, the largest single provider, in terms of numbers, of services;

- Reena, one of the largest providers here in Toronto; I was visiting there just last week;

- Community Living Ontario, which is a province-wide federation of families who support the full participation and inclusion of people with development challenges; we also hosted the Community Living Day last week and were pleased to do so;

- also with ODEN, the Ontario Disability Employment Network;

- and most recently—I think it was yesterday—the Family Alliance of Ontario, which are strong advocates for the expansion of direct funding.

Many of these folk, and many of the families that are facing significant pressures, have been kind enough to be in touch with us. I said this morning that I think we need to work on this issue together, all members of this House, and I want to repeat that. In fact, let me really emphasize that, because I want to speak to the values that I think underlie the need for this committee.

I believe that all members of this House can, and indeed should, be united in understanding that caring for our most vulnerable members of society, which surely includes people with developmental disabilities, is more than just a sacred duty, although it is clearly that. It is also part of what we must do to build a society in which any one of us would want to live.

As legislators, our response to this issue is surely one of the criteria on which history will judge us. Simply put, we need better answers. I think the member opposite has highlighted our need to be creative and entrepreneurial and innovative in this regard, and I agree with her. So I believe that this truly is an issue on which we can work together in the service of the people of Ontario, and I'm happy to provide my commitment to working constructively with you and all members, member opposite.

I don't want to prejudice what a standing committee of this Legislative Assembly might do. I think it's too shaky to do that. But I do want to say, on a personal basis, that I'm not the kind of person who wants to champion something and is going to sit around and let something gather dust. Let me just put that on the record. If I thought that, I'd just move on and do something else with my life. There's lots of challenges out there.

Now, I imagine some of you may have expected me to spend more time here talking about all the wonderful things our government has done to help people with developmental disabilities. We certainly have done that, and on another occasion, I'd be happy to supply details, but that would take longer than the seven minutes I've self-allocated myself here today.

I certainly hope to see members of the opposition supporting our budget, by the way, which proposes to add almost \$43 million and will help an additional 1,000 adults and their families with new or additional supports. Assuming the budget passes, this would bring our total increase in spending for this area to more than \$620 million a year. That's a 60% increase in funding since 2003. Is it enough? No, it's not. It's a 60% increase. I am proud of what we've achieved so far, but like my friend from Whitby—Oshawa, I know there is still so much, so very much more work that needs to be done.

I met with the Ombudsman a couple of weeks ago. We had a good chat about some of the issues. I really appreciate the fact that he's looking into some of the case-specific issues. I heard him on the CBC saying that this is a complex problem; that there are no easy or fast solutions; that it's going to take time. We're going to need to do some long-term planning in co-operation with each other here, the various parties, and obviously with the families involved.

1520

While government definitely has a role to play, I also believe we need to do more as a society. True inclusion and citizenship can't be bought. It doesn't stem from government funding alone; it comes from the ground up, from the community, the individuals and the families, and from each and every one of us. That's why I welcome this resolution and look forward to seeing a commitment from all parties, including all colleagues on my side of the House, please note, to tackle this challenge and to build a better system of supports for people with developmental disabilities.

I know, Mr. Speaker, you can't refer to a member of this assembly using any other moniker except their riding, but I want to just close by saying, thanks, Christine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: My colleague from Whitby–Oshawa is requesting the members of this House support establishing a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for all Ontarians.

Children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or an intellectual disability and mental illness need our help. They are not getting the care or treatment that they need. As a caring society, we have a moral obligation to help those who cannot help themselves. This includes people with developmental disabilities.

I have learned from the parents of children with autism who have come into my office how stressful it is for their families to cope with caring for their children emotionally, physically and financially. They tell me their stories of how they are on their own, that there is very little help from government, both financially and treatment-wise. The help is slow to access because of confusing red tape and waiting lines, when early treatment is crucial to improving the long-term developmental health of the child.

They tell me of very good care and treatment that is offered by the private sector, but the high cost is ruinous for most families or beyond the means of low-income families. They tell me of how they buckle down and accept the responsibility of care and cost, as all family members, including grandparents, pitch in and do their best to look after their child. I have met many brave and strong families for whom I have the highest respect, but they get tired and they become poor and they get worn out.

Last week in Ottawa, a mother left her 19-year-old son at a government office because she was at her wits' end. She couldn't do it any longer. Those of us who have healthy children can hardly imagine making such a difficult decision. The poor woman was tired and stressed to the limit. What a heartbreaking story.

Parents from Stittsville told me of their 21-year-old son who has severe autism. The walls in their home are covered with plywood instead of drywall because their son would put his fist or his head through the drywall. The father said he is strong enough to wrestle his son to the floor when he gets violent, which is about every two weeks, but the mother has trouble restraining her son, particularly when he head-butts or bites her. She wears long-sleeved shirts to work to cover up the black bruises on her arms.

They have found excellent private daycare and rehabilitation services at Main Street Community Services for their son, but they are worried about who will take care of their son when they get older, and they are getting tired.

But there are several good news stories of parents of children who are developmentally disabled who are aggressively advocating to government for more and better care and treatment for children who need help. Anne Rahming and Mick Kitor have children with autism

and they have come to my office several times, are part of Autism Ontario, have met with the CEO of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa and with our member from Whitby–Oshawa, who is our health critic.

There are two private care and treatment providers in my riding who are doing a great job.

Jennifer and Deborah Wyatt founded TIPES, which provides care and treatment for children who are developmentally disabled. They have a high level of education, training and experience, and have come to my office and the office of our health critic with great ideas on how government can do a better job of helping these children and their parents.

Main Street Community Services in Stittsville is a not-for-profit charity that was started by Shelley Steinberg and Erica Rinfret. It offers care and treatment for 250 children and young adults who are developmentally disabled, at six locations in west Ottawa. They provide a much-appreciated service and they are growing rapidly.

But there is always a need for more money to fund these valuable services. That is government's job. So government must set spending priorities and focus on the top priorities, which are health care and education. Lower-priority activities will have funding reduced to create the money we need. Here is a list of things that the government should do: We should cancel the Green Energy Act and reduce spending over the next 20 years by up to \$50 billion; we should postpone the implementation of all-day kindergarten to save \$1.5 billion a year; we should sell crown corporations like the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.; we should reduce budgets in other lower-priority ministries; and we should have no more scandals like eHealth, Ornge, Presto or the gas plant cancellations, which amount to \$5 billion, which would have provided a lot of care for the people who need it.

Government has lost its way. Government should be about helping people, not things. Mr. Speaker, we need this select committee to help develop a strategy to help people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The Callaghans are here today for this debate: Dave, Tim, Kim; I see Leo and Kathy and, of course, Anna, who was mentioned during question period today.

With this resolution from the member for Whitby, Christine Elliott, we do have an opportunity now to refocus, to set priorities, to wake up Ontario's social system through approaches and programs laden with fresh, cost-effective ideas to address the complex problems we're hearing about today. We can address these problems through flexibility and choice.

There are many things that need to be done differently, and there are a great number of things that can be done better; of course they can be done more efficiently, but most importantly, they have to be done effectively.

I continue to advocate that it's those on the front lines and clients themselves who should continue to be invited

to tell us what needs to be done before a committee, as proposed this afternoon, on how our system can work smarter and more productively. To that end, I note Community Living Ontario's proposal for a person-centred plan for parents over 65 supporting developmentally disabled sons and daughters, and funding supports when the parent is no longer able to provide care.

The vision remains an effective, affordable, accountable system that supports and invests in families and in their communities, where adults are as independent as they can be. Support is provided to people most in need, as we just heard. There's \$10 billion in the social services budget. There's obviously the opportunity and the clear responsibility to better serve those who are disabled and those who are truly disadvantaged. That's the point of this motion as I see it, Speaker.

More and more, we're hearing stories of parents, often in their 60s or 70s or 80s, who are desperate for help for their loved ones. They're terrified about what will happen to their child when they are gone. They're concerned that there are no appropriate housing options available for their children, little chance of employment and no opportunities to have a life like everyone else.

1530

Beyond the co-morbidity, the dual diagnosis, of intellectual disability and mental illness, as we see in this motion, we are seeing the advent of a public health epidemic, if you will: young people with severe physical, mental and developmental disabilities now entering adulthood. We must find a path, we must show the way—a committee can show the way—for this cadre of young people. They're no longer part of the school system and now require that additional family support, respite programs, home care services and perhaps residential programs. There is a gap in communities. For example, Community Living Ontario is not capable, in many cases, of adequately dealing with individuals previously in institutional centres.

I do meet with families. A family in my riding, the Callaghans, one of many families in desperate need of assistance for loved ones who are severely disabled—the Callaghans' 20-year-old daughter Anna is in the Speaker's gallery. The Callaghan family tell me of the extreme difficulty they and countless other families have in planning for physically and mentally disabled loved ones, in particular as they exit the school system.

My question, Speaker: How can families like the Callaghans appropriately care for their loved ones when government is not in a position or refuses to properly address this issue? Hence our call for a more routinized structure—a select committee—to look at this. They need somewhere to turn. It's time this government offered that place to turn.

Today's motion will help to address this growing crisis. It will provide assistance to families like the Callaghans—assistance for Anna—and countless families like theirs across the province, and provide the support they require and most surely deserve in our very

rich province of Ontario. As such, I call on all members of all parties to support the motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is something I'm quite happy and glad to support.

I was really disturbed by the comments of the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, which I thought were really rather disingenuous. There is a certain non-partisanship in here that happens—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw. Suggests that they were unfair.

Michael Wilson, who has been a lifelong advocate—now the chancellor of the University of Toronto, who is a dear friend—advocated for this in the 1990s and at the beginning of this decade.

I would like to draw the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills's conclusion—from a fellow Conservative, of the state of these services for his family and for families like mine when your government was in power. I say this very sincerely, because I believe you are sincere. If you believe those things, then please stop demanding tax cuts at any price and ask yourself why you're a member of a party that did some of the things your government did to families like mine and some of the people living in my constituency who had the most basic things taken away from them when they lived in poverty. It meant that some of the crises you talked about legitimately in some of the families that come from your riding were greatly worsened. Go back and look at what Mr. Wilson said of that period of time in Ontario's history.

I have great, great respect for the member from Whitby-Oshawa. She is one of the most non-partisan and thoughtful people in this House. I fully support what she's doing, and I give her huge credit for it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham, would you come to order, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have a fairly small-c conservative view. I have foster-parented children and I have adopted children with severe disabilities. My son Michael, who is my personal hero, has fetal alcohol syndrome. He's HIV-positive. He had his leg broken when he was two years old. His mother gave him alcohol when he was 11 to make him quiet; this is a kid with FAS.

I've had foster parents come to me and say, "I can't take care of the child anymore," because the child is 18 or 21. "I have to give them up." I said, "Why?" Michael is still my son. Every child that I and the support group of parents worked with—continued caring after government support stopped. One of the things I feel very strongly about is that all of us who have means, as I do—much greater means than my parents had, and much greater means than my grandparents had—have some simple responsibility as parents.

The state must play its role—\$620 million more. We have more capacity, more children's mental health services, than any other generation of Ontarians ever had. This government is investing in it. While our overall per capita spending is lower than any other province, we are at historic highs in spending.

But my view of this is that there's also a parental responsibility. There are all kinds of children out there that simply need a safe place. There are so many of us who could adopt or foster a child.

This province has few rivals in Canada in providing mental health services. When I was in Manitoba, at the time the only way my child could get mental health services while he was living in the community, in a loving family, was to be institutionalized. They would have to lock him up so that he could get the proper psychological supports.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We don't do that anymore.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We don't do that here in Ontario. While there are shortcomings, and there is a need for this committee, I am very disappointed if we don't at least recognize that the record of this government is pretty unprecedented.

I am glad to keep this nonpartisan and to support my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa, because I think it's good leadership.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Whitby-Oshawa, you have about 50 seconds left from your party, and two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Okay. I'd like to start by thanking the member from Parkdale-High Park, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for their comments today. I think we've had a very good airing, a very good discussion, of the issues and I would just like to comment on a couple of the themes that I heard.

The member from Parkdale-High Park talked about the need to make some systemic changes and that we can't keep doing things the same old way. We really do need to make changes, and we need to look at the system across many ministries, because it's not just about community and social services. There are many other ministries that will have input into this: health, education, and children and youth, among others. We need to take a look at that and figure out how we can coordinate the response.

The Minister of Community and Social Services, as well as the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, talked about the moral obligation that we have to help people who need our help. The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills I know has a strong commitment to this issue. I've had the opportunity to visit his riding. He is working very hard with his constituents to try and provide individual supports and services where he is able to, but he recognizes that we need to do more.

Ultimately, we have all been talking about priorities—priorities in government and priorities in spending. This

is not an area that has traditionally been a priority, and I think the time has come where we need to make it a priority, because families are exhausted, caregivers are exhausted and we have a rapidly aging population. So as bad as the situation is now, it's only going to get worse in the near future, and we need to be able to plan for that, because it is about people. It's about young people having an opportunity to have lives of purpose and dignity in our communities, to have the opportunity to work, to have the opportunity to be included, to be able to have the same social and recreational opportunities that all of us take for granted.

Similarly with their caregivers, they need to have a life too. Many of them can barely get out of their own homes except for the few hours a week when they may have someone offer them some respite to get out and do basic things like grocery shopping or maybe seeing a movie with their other children—just basic life. We owe that to the people of Ontario. We owe it to all the people who are here today and the people who are watching.

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to the debate today.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR

LES PAIEMENTS RAPIDES

Mr. Del Duca moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry / *Projet de loi 69, Loi concernant les paiements effectués aux termes de contrats et de contrats de sous-traitance dans l'industrie de la construction.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It is a tremendous pleasure for me to be standing in my place in this House today to speak to my very first private member's bill. In particular, I'm delighted that this proposed legislation is something that relates to Ontario's construction industry. This is an industry that's near and dear to my own upbringing, in my own life. I can tell many, many stories—though I won't necessarily bore everyone here in the chamber today, I can tell many stories about times spent working summers in construction, how my father virtually, since he arrived in Canada in 1958 from Italy, within a couple of years with his engineering background was able to establish himself and has worked consistently in Ontario's construction industry, both in the ICI sector and the residential sector and who, I might add, after several decades—he might get a little bit annoyed at me for saying “several decades,” but it remains true. After several decades of working in the industry, he continues

to work in Ontario's construction industry, as did many other members of my family.

As some in the chamber will know, I was elected back on September 6, and I can remember, not that many weeks after first arriving here as an MPP representing Vaughan, having the opportunity to meet with some representatives from various associations and organizations from within the industry, some of whom are here with us today. I will be recognizing them in just a quick second. These individuals came and talked to me about an issue, and it was an issue that I'd heard about before, having spent some time, as I said, working in the industry and near the industry.

It was an issue that I'd heard about before with respect to prompt payment, which is at the very heart and in fact what this particular proposed bill is all about. They came to speak with me and made an impassioned pitch—and I know they'd done this over the course of meeting with many other members from all sides of this House to talk about the importance of this particular issue and how inactivity or inaction on this particular issue over the last number of years had been hampering or hindering the industry's effectiveness.

I listened to the story. I listened to their input. Working very closely with a number of them over the last number of weeks and, frankly, now months, we are at the point where we have introduced this particular legislation, Bill 69, which I think speaks to some of the very valid concerns that these associations have and will help move this industry forward and certainly make sure that we don't continue to allow a system to exist in Ontario where this particular industry, which is of such crucial importance to Ontario's economy, is hampered or hindered.

I think it's really important to note as well that within the industry itself, before I had the opportunity to speak with them and learn more about the issue of prompt payment, there was a great deal of work that took place. I think members on all sides here will understand that the construction industry is complex; it's diverse. There are a lot of competing ideas and demands, and that's fantastic. That's what helps make it the energetic, dynamic sector or industry that it is, that employs so many people right around the province.

But I think there's a certain tribute that is deserved or should be paid to those associations within the industry that had worked very hard for a number of months trying to get to a point where there was broader consensus around the importance of moving forward with this kind of legislation. I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are some people in the members' gallery here representing various associations that had played a very constructive and very important role with respect to making sure that this item moved forward.

If I could take just a moment to recognize—and I hope that I don't miss anyone in particular, but in terms of the associations themselves, we have folks representing the Ontario Road Builders' Association, and individuals representing the Council of Ontario Construction Associ-

ations, specifically Mr. Ian Cunningham and Mr. Ashley De Souza from COCA.

I can remember the day that I mentioned a second ago—that first meeting that I had. I can remember that Eryl Roberts, from the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, was one of the individuals who came into my office and, along with some others from the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario—folks like Tom Vivian, Jeff Lyons, Jim Kellett and Lucy Roberts, some of whom are here today—made an impassioned pitch, as I said earlier, about the importance of making sure that we move forward with this.

I do believe I missed one individual, and I shouldn't have missed this individual. He's actually a former member from this House. That would be Mr. Ron Johnson, who was the former member from Brant, who also serves in many capacities—many extraordinary capacities—within Ontario's construction industry and has a great deal of knowledge and expertise. In addition to his role in advocating for this particular legislation, he also serves as the chair, and is doing a fantastic job as the chair of Ontario's College of Trades.

These individuals came and met with me. We had the discussion and we had the conversation. They made their pitch, and as I said earlier, it was very, very effective.

But before we all worked together to come up with this particular legislation, there were others. There were others who were doing work on this as well; there were others who came before me. So when I introduced this bill at first reading a number of days ago, I did mention two individuals and I want to highlight their contribution to this entire process.

One is our current Speaker, the current member from Brant, who, back in 2011, I believe, introduced Bill 211, which was a bill protecting contractors through prompt payment, a bill that didn't successfully navigate its way through this particular Legislature but certainly a very earnest effort on the part of current Speaker Levac.

I also want to pay tribute to and thank my colleague from Mississauga East-Cooksville, with whom I've worked fairly closely on this. I know that she had been in touch with representatives from the Ontario General Contractors Association, another important association within our province's construction industry that had worked very closely with the others who are here today in our gallery, and also with the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville, to make sure that we were able to take some kind of positive action and deliver positive results for the industry on this particular legislation.

If I could take just a very quick moment before I get into a heartier discussion about the content of the bill itself—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Get to the content—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm getting there. I'm getting there.

I just wanted to pay tribute very quickly to some folks who have worked very hard on this particular bill from my end. I have a couple of interns. Andrea Emesaks and Neville Brito—I hope I pronounced that correctly—are

here in the gallery as well and have done some fantastic work along with my executive assistant, Taleen Balian. They have done some exceptional work on this.

Lastly, I will say, with respect to some members from the other side of the House that I've had a chance to speak with around this—the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the member from Leeds-Grenville—I know I've had some fantastic conversations with them about the importance of this, and I believe I had the opportunity to take some constructive advice back. I think this is the kind of legislation that presents this Legislature, this chamber—all of us—with the opportunity to work together.

With my remaining time, Speaker, I'm going to try to talk about the bill itself. As I said earlier, the importance of the construction industry in Ontario cannot be overstated. This industry, in 2012, employed over 400,000 Ontario workers and represented 6.4% of Ontario's entire employment number. It's also the largest investor in apprenticeships, which is so crucial to the future of our province, accounting for roughly 40% of all active apprenticeships in the province of Ontario.

With respect to prompt payment legislation, currently the majority of US states, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Europe Union, Australia and New Zealand all have forms of prompt payment legislation. That's why, among many other reasons, I thought it was important to introduce this legislation. It is high time that Ontario should too.

I don't want to spend too much time going through every single aspect of what happens in the construction industry, but if I can, I'll very quickly mention that most construction projects follow contract templates that are either a standard industry contract or a contract that has been developed specifically.

Depending on the type of contract that's being used, very often there are certain clauses within these contracts that are known in the industry as "pay when paid" clauses or "pay if paid" clauses that essentially can allow contractors to delay payment to a subcontractor, without recourse or damage, if payment to that contractor is being delayed, or can absolve the contractor of any liability towards subcontractors in the event of a default higher up the vertical structure.

1550

Late payment essentially occurs when an owner or the payer does not abide by their contracts and does not pay their contractors or subcontractors in an agreed-upon timely fashion. Owners are not required to pay a fee for delaying payment. Therefore, there's no obligation to them to make payments on time. In addition, pay-when-paid and pay-if-paid clauses provide a loophole for owners in situations where they cannot make payment.

In a nutshell, Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, is being proposed to set out minimum norms for payment schedules in the construction industry. This will ensure that contractors and subcontractors have a predictable flow of funds for satisfactorily performed work on a construction project.

At its most simple, this bill sets out minimum rules and requirements for payments and invoicing made under construction contracts. More specifically:

It entitles every contractor and subcontractor to be paid progress payments in a timely fashion.

It entitles every contractor and subcontractor to be paid a final payment when work is completed in accordance with the contract.

It provides contractors and subcontractors with a right to suspend work or terminate a contract if they are not paid their progress payments.

It places an obligation on the payer to pay interest on any unpaid amount of progress payment or final payment.

It ensures that owners provide certain financial information to contractors before entering into a contract to prove that they can make their payments on time.

This also entitles subcontractors to receive certain financial information through written request.

There's a great deal of additional information that's contained in this bill, and I know that there's going to be debate back and forth here today, which is fantastic, and I look forward to listening to that. I know that there are some associations within the industry that, after reviewing this legislation, in discussions with me and I'm sure with other members from all sides of this House, have expressed—I wouldn't use the word "concerns." They've asked questions and they've sought clarity. In particular, I want to mention the Ontario Home Builders' Association, a fantastic component of Ontario's construction industry. I think it's important to recognize—and I believe they corresponded with most members, if not all members of the House over the last day or two. In particular, some of the concerns, questions or requests for clarity that they brought forward I think in their own words demonstrate that this is the kind of bill that is needed, the kind of legislation that's needed in the province of Ontario. Whatever questions or points of clarity that particular association is perhaps rightly seeking can be dealt with at legislative committee should this bill move on from second reading today.

As I wrap up, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say again, it's a privilege for me to stand in the House to deliver these remarks regarding my very first private member's bill on an industry that is of crucial importance to Ontario's economy and of great personal significance to me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 69 and congratulate the member for his first private member's bill introduction.

I think that the intention of this bill is quite—I'll say it right off the bat: I intend to support bill. But there are some concerns, and I would categorize them as concerns, that I think can be addressed fairly easily.

I think it is important to have a balance. We need to make sure that the issue of late payments in the construction industry certainly is addressed. I do know that that's

an issue and it's something that deserves attention, and this bill certainly attempts to do that. But I believe that Bill 69, in its current form, may actually do more harm than good and may beg for counterbalance to be sought after the fact. I'd love to see it go to the committee and have some of these concerns addressed with stakeholders at the table as well. So more consultation with the construction industry and certainly some input from customers as well.

The concept of progress payments is definitely worthy of consideration, perhaps even promotion, but I believe that it should always be agreed upon between the two parties in question. Currently Bill 69, I believe, goes a little bit too far because it mandates that an individual must pay progress payments if requested by a contractor even if they never agreed to pay in such a fashion in the original contract. Bill 69 also forces individuals to disclose personal information, financial information to contractors to prove they can afford to hire them, which is a serious privacy concern and certainly will be brought up by other stakeholders in the marketplace if this bill goes through in its current form.

I'm very familiar with other industries where they require certain financial information. Usually that's for when there's financing involved, for example, when you're buying a car or a home. There are a little bit different circumstances if I'm hiring someone to maybe do some contract work on my house or a property I have, or any number of contracts that could be sought.

The bottom line is, I think Bill 69 is a step in the right direction for sure. There are still some serious concerns that must be addressed, I think, at the committee stage, and hopefully the member is amenable to some of these ideas, and certainly the industry stakeholders' input would be welcome as well.

In conclusion—I know that some of my colleagues would like to speak to this as well—I think we really need to be sure that, again, we're fair to everybody, we're fair to consumers out there as well, but at the same time, it is critical that we address the issue of late payments, or even non-payments in some cases, to contractors. There needs to be a better balance, I think. I know that this bill has probably been around a little bit in different forms and has been refined, but certainly it can benefit from the discussions and conversations that we can have in consultation with stakeholders and also with many of the consumers who may have an interest in having input on this bill.

I do believe that the bill is well intended and actually really attempts to address this very serious problem within the industry, and I think good debate would be welcome on this. It's something that I think all three parties can agree needs to be addressed. So congratulations for bringing it forward—your first bill, too. It's got substance, and that's what we like to see.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, and welcome our guests in the gallery today, too.

I'll gladly support this bill. I think it's a concept we should all get behind. If you work a hard day's work, you should get paid for it at the end of the day. Unfortunately, that's something that we don't see every day in Ontario, and that's not acceptable.

What this bill does is it sets minimum norms for payment schedules in the construction industry so that contractors and subcontractors receive a predictable flow of funds for the work that they perform on a construction project. It gives contractors and subcontractors the option to suspend work or terminate their contracts, allowing them to deal with payment delays, and finally, it places an obligation on the payor to pay interest on any unpaid payments. This gives the owners incentive to pay their bills on time. Bill 69 addresses a widespread problem of late payments to contractors and subcontractors in the construction industry.

In my riding of Davenport, we have a lot of people who work in the trades. This is an issue that affects our community. We know that in the trades community we have people of all ages. Young people are getting their first jobs—they're vulnerable because they haven't been at work sites before; we have new Canadians who are getting jobs, and we have an industry that by nature puts people in precarious situations. I see people in our office who have come in because they've been injured at work and so forth. So there's a kind of inherent precarity around the trades, but it's absolutely unacceptable that it's made more precarious because people can't depend on getting paid at the end of the day.

Why do these late payments occur? Well, construction contracts have what we have heard here is called "pay when paid" or "pay if paid" clauses that put no obligation on the owner to pay on time. The "pay when paid" clause allows a contractor to delay payment to a subcontractor without any recourse or damage if payment to that contractor has been delayed. The "pay if paid" absolves the contractor of any liability towards subcontractors in the event of a default higher up the vertical structure.

Currently, there are no additional fees or punishments when a payor is late making a payment. Late payment has become the industry norm, and many are forced to adopt the lesser standards of those using payment delays to conserve their own financing costs.

Construction projects are, like many things, vertical structures with the owner on top and the contractors and subcontractors below, and when the flow of funds is limited at any level, the people affected are always down at the bottom of the ladder. This means that the costs of late payment are often shouldered by those who are least able to carry that risk and the people who are most vulnerable.

1600

As I mentioned, I think the trades are in a particularly precarious situation, but if you look at our workforce in Ontario, and particularly in the GTA right now, we're seeing an entire workforce that is vulnerable. We had a United Way report that came out that shows that almost half of workers in the GTA are working in situations that

are uncertain, that are precarious. The report talks about some of the implications that has on a family, on a worker. It talks about the stress that families are under when you don't know if you're going to get paid from day to day, from week to week, from month to month. What does that mean if you're trying to put your kids in camp next summer, even if you have money one year but you don't have money the next? There's a huge amount of stress this puts on people. I think, unfortunately, this is true in too many jobs right now.

We also know that right now we're facing a strike in the LCBO tonight. This is another example of precarious work and the gendered nature of wage discrimination and racialized poverty and racialized vulnerability. This is something that needs to be addressed from sector to sector. I think people understand from one workplace to another that we all work one way or another and we all deserve fair compensation at the end of the day.

It's obvious that the government has a role to play to make sure that people do receive fairness in their workplace. We need to deliver some of that stability and some of that security to folks in the construction field.

Late payment can have extremely negative consequences, not only on individuals, I'd say, but also on the construction industry and on the Ontario economy. Consequences include reduced employment in the industry, because there's always a risk of late payment. We see contractors, especially trades contractors, limit their payroll commitments to manage this risk, and this means less employment opportunities for tradespeople. This risk of late payment also means less investment in apprenticeships generally and greater reliance on independent operators, because contractors may not be able to afford to hire as many people who are paid, hourly workers. So we create even more precarious work.

There's no legislation that currently exists in Ontario to provide a remedy to contractors and subcontractors when they're subjected to late-payment practices, even though other jurisdictions have this legislation. It's time that Ontario does this as well.

I welcome Bill 69. I congratulate the member from Vaughan on his first private member's bill. I would encourage him to talk to cabinet and make sure that this is a government bill so this actually comes into being and it passes.

This is something that should happen now. It should have happened a long time ago. We've heard this for a long time. Just in general, we have a lot of work to do to enforce good labour practices in this province, and we expect this government to step up to the plate—the social justice Premier—to make sure that we have social justice in all of our workplaces.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Jackson assumes ballot item number 39 and Mr. Milligan assumes ballot item number 40.

Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm so pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry.

I'd like to begin by first welcoming, in the visitors' gallery, representatives from the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations and the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, as well as Ron Johnson.

This bill is particularly important for me, Speaker, because I have spent some time researching this issue myself. I was actually planning to introduce it as a private member's bill myself this session. As it happens, a good idea has many suitors, so it turned out that my colleague the member from Vaughan was working on the idea as well. Since the rules do not allow two members from the same party to co-sponsor a bill, I'm delighted today to stand up and support my friend and colleague from Vaughan in this worthy endeavour.

The Prompt Payment Act is about sound business practices and it is about fairness. It is about having the right to be paid for a service rendered in a timely fashion, something I am sure each of us can relate to. After all, I cannot tell my phone company, "Listen, I am not paying you this month, because I did not get paid my salary," and I cannot tell my landlord I'm not paying my rent until my subtenant pays me, yet this is exactly what takes place in the construction industry.

An owner can say to a subcontractor, "I will pay you as and when I get paid," or worse, he can say, "I will pay if I get paid." That's because current construction contracts often have pay-when-paid and pay-if-paid clauses in their contracts. Essentially, what all this means is that I will pay the guy below me if and when the guy above me pays.

Such clauses are not only unfair to the small contractor, but they are also bad for business. If subcontractors are not getting paid in a timely fashion, it means they face cash flow problems. Most of all, it inserts uncertainty into the construction business. With cash flow uncertain and a cash flow crunch, they're able to bid on fewer jobs and employ fewer people. It also means less ability to invest in modern equipment.

Finally, what contractors do is they start to factor the cost of late payment into their business. And guess what? This means that the cost of building that school or the cost to build that highway just went up. And guess who pays for this in the end? Why, Speaker, that would be you and I with our taxes.

The Prompt Payment Act is much-needed and would address this issue. What it will do is it will set out minimum guidelines for payment timelines that will ensure that contractors and subcontractors receive a predictable flow of funds for the work they perform. The bill will also allow contractors and subcontractors to suspend work or terminate their contracts if they are not paid in a timely fashion.

I'd like to acknowledge the Ontario General Contractors Association, as well as the Council of Ontario Construction Associations and many others for educating me

on this topic and for their ongoing advocacy on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, to me, this is a common-sense bill. It's about fairness, it's about reducing the cost of doing business, it's about supporting the construction business in Ontario. I hope that all members in this Legislature will find it in themselves to support this worthy bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the act here. I really like the title on it; it's the Prompt Payment Act. I would find it hard for anyone to somehow disagree with that.

I think the Prompt Payment Act does point out a very important problem. I've heard about it, not overwhelmingly, but I think largely in the more complex funding of "Who is the developer, who is the funder of it all, and who ultimately gets paid?"

When you have a delinquent general contractor type of person, which there may be, as there are MPPs who are delinquent sometimes—I just leave that to the viewer to determine. I think really what is important is that I'm in support of the principle of the bill. I am in support of the bill certainly going toward second reading. The reason I do is because Ontario really is dependent, first of all, on the industry itself. I think it should work in partnership with the industry and the various trade groups within the industry to make sure we get it right. But at the end of the day, a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

This idea, for instance, at a condo, I've been told—I'm no expert in this area. I've been told that there's really no money that floats down until the last few units are sold. If it's a project that's maybe overpriced or poorly marketed and the 10 last units, where all the money is, aren't sold for a year or two, the poor subtrade that put all the pipes and tiling in, and all that stuff, is liable to be out of business. They've spent the money on the salaries, the equipment and all that stuff, and it's my understanding—now, I see some of the industry people here.

We need to be informed and educated, because we're politicians. There isn't one person in this room—I'm sure you helped the member draft the bill. I understand how it works. I encourage you to do it. I want to support it, but I would expect the industry would want this to go to committee, where the industry could make their arguments between the issues that maybe the labour market set up itself. Whether it's unionized or not, that's a whole different discussion. But I would say this: I am in support of the principle of pay promptly. We're expected to do it and, I think, that industry.

1610

Now there are some exemptions in the bill, and that should be dealt with in committee. So I would be on the record as being supportive of a very important industry to Ontario, the home builders and the construction trades industries.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I happen to think this is a good bill. I'm trying to understand the—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do my best. I reach out as often as I can, please.

I think it's a good bill. I think the previous bills were good bills as well. I think we need to move on.

I'm trying to understand the reasoning behind the objections of the Conservative members, and I'm not sure I understand them. They haven't been clear, or at least they have not been clearly articulated today. I know the member from Barrie said, "This bill may do more harm than good." I didn't hear the arguments as to why that might be so.

The member from Durham mentions the former MPP Ron Johnson. For some reason, I suspect some of the Conservative members don't love Ron Johnson anymore the way they used to. I think you've just got to bring some love back. I don't know what Ron has done—he's a good guy. He was there in my time; I've seen him since every now and then. I have sensed a bit of tension between you and him. I think we need to resolve this conflict somehow; otherwise, we won't be able to move on. I could be wrong.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As we come around to you again, you might explain to me what those differences may be as they relate to Ron Johnson or as they relate to the bill, in terms of how this bill might do more harm than good.

From my reading of it, the prompt payment is a widespread problem throughout the whole industry. It has been thus for quite some time. If this is true, we need to be able to do something to make sure that contractors and subcontractors get paid. It's only right that if they perform the job, that they get paid for the work.

There should be a law that the Minister of Labour should promptly take—prompt payment—promptly take and implement it. My sense is that the Minister of Labour has a good sense of the problem and a good sense of the solution—much of which is this bill—and perhaps there may be other things that the minister may want to include. But move on. Why so much delay? I don't get it.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of Transportation, it's yours?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Infrastructure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Infrastructure, all right. Minister, you were right here in the chamber—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to speak to the bill.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take it on. Embrace it. Take it on. Or at least, I suspect your staff has a good sense of what the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to have order in the House, and I'd ask the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I thought I was speaking to the bill. Please inform me from time to time when you think I'm not, but all this, Speaker, is very related to the bill.

I do believe that the ministry staff has a good sense of the issue and they've heard about these complaints for years. They probably have a good draft of the bill, and I'm saying to them, they should move on.

I heard the member from Vaughan saying that the Home Builders' Association has expressed concern. You didn't quite say what those concerns were, but they are requesting some clarity. I don't have a clue what that means, but I have a sense of the Home Builders' Association because, you see, I've been trying to change the Condominium Act for quite some time. As you might know, the developers don't like me very much, because of the work I've done in that particular area. I believe some of the developers have been building in such a hurry and so badly, with such poor quality that the consumers, the condo owners and renters—but particularly the condo owners—need a break and need consumer protection from bad development and bad developers. So when you say the Home Builders' Association expressed some concerns, I get nervous and worried, because I think we've got a problem when they say, "We have a problem." I'm hoping the minister will not be moved by those entreaties in any way, as he indicates, and hopefully we'll be able to move on.

Another concern around this issue has to do, in my mind, with the fact that at one point, developers used to have to pay for workers' compensation coverage. Then, brilliantly, they created independent contractors and subcontractors, and they are now required to have WSIB. Without getting what's called the clearance slip, which costs a heck of a lot of money, they won't be able to get that money back from the 10% they hold back.

Why can't we force the industry to have coverage, so independent contractors don't have to pay the extra to get the coverage they need, when they sometimes get so little in return by way of payments?

That's something I urge you, Minister, and the member from Vaughan to consider as we review this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in the House to speak in support of Bill 69, proposed by my colleague and seatmate, the member from Vaughan.

Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, is a necessary measure to help protect contractors, employees and consumers. When an individual or company enters into a contract, it is important that the contract is fulfilled. One aspect of the contract in the construction industry is the issue of payment and, more specifically, timely payment.

Late payments happen when an owner does not abide by the contract and does not pay the contractor or subcontractors in an agreed-upon, timely fashion, and this is totally unacceptable. If construction contracts are not paid in a timely manner, then the jobs and livelihoods of contractors and subcontractors and employees are put

at risk; there is less investment in apprenticeships, in new machinery and equipment; and there are higher construction costs. There need to be consequences when owners do not pay on time.

These "pay when paid" clauses would allow contractors to delay payments to subcontractors, without recourse or damage, if payment to the contractors has been delayed. Further, "pay if paid" clauses absolve a contractor of any liability towards subcontractors in the event of a default higher up in the vertical structure.

In other words, there are no additional fees when a payer is late in payment and, therefore, no punishment when someone is late. I've never heard that before in a real situation but only in the construction industry.

These types of late payments have a serious impact on the industry. When contractors are not able to consistently predict when they receive payments and outstanding revenues, these contractors, many of which are small business owners, are forced to reduce their number of employees. Employment declines because subcontractors, especially trade contractors, must limit their payroll commitments to reflect the amount of late-payment risk that they can afford to take on.

Mr. Speaker, we need to support our small business owners. I know our recent budget, proposed by the Minister of Finance, talks about supporting small businesses. Bill 69 further supports small business owners, contractors, subcontractors and all of their employees and helps bring in some kind of standards for prompt payment. I'm very, very pleased that this bill would do just that.

There are also other issues about consumer protection. When contractors are uncertain about when they will receive their payment, or they experience late payments from owners, those contractors begin to hedge the risk. This means that the costs of late payment are often included in the bids on construction contracts, thus increasing the costs to the consumers. Late-payment risk can also limit the amount of work that a contractor or a subcontractor can take on at a time, which will result in less bids being placed on a project. Fewer bids equals less competition on construction projects. Both of these factors can make construction work even more expensive.

This private member's bill from my colleague from Vaughan is an important protection for all small businesses but also the industry. This bill will set out minimum norms for payment schedules in the construction industry that will ensure that contractors and subcontractors receive a predictable flow of funds for the work they perform on a construction project.

1620

This bill also places an obligation on the payer to pay interest on any unpaid payments so that we can ensure that we are giving owners incentive to pay their bills on time.

Finally, I'm very pleased to encourage all members of the House—I know, through past experiences, that the opposition has a tendency of being a critic. Come on,

folks. This is about small businesses. We're here to support them. I'm encouraging everyone to move this to committee so that we can have final review.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to join the debate here this afternoon on Bill 69, the prompt payment bill. I'd like to clap my hands for Ian Cunningham from COCA. He's done an excellent job, because not only did we have the member from Vaughan, who wanted to put this bill forward; we had the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville as well who wanted to put it forward. The member from Leeds–Grenville wanted to put the prompt payment bill on the floor, and I did too. So you've been doing an excellent job, Mr. Cunningham from COCA.

I must say—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: Oh, and Paul Miller too? Really? Very good.

Ms. Damerla had an excellent job at explaining the details—I'm being nice—explaining the details as to what occurs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to stick to riding names.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mississauga East–Cooksville; sorry. She did an excellent job in explaining why this type of a bill is needed, so I'm not going to go into all the details again as to why this type of bill is needed.

The member from Trinity–Spadina in Toronto doesn't understand exactly why there is a small issue with this bill that needs to be checked out at committee.

I know the member is from Toronto. He lives in Toronto. He's a Toronto guy. There are some privacy concerns regarding financial disclosure provisions in the bill. These are the problems—and not necessarily with the big Toronto contractors. I can tell you that, being from eastern Ontario—Prince Edward–Hastings, to be exact—there are some concerns in some of the smaller jurisdictions, let's say, in the province. While there are many large construction projects like the ones here in Toronto, there's a notable difference in scale between the capabilities of a larger contractor and some smaller subcontractors. Those differences between the size of those companies are much smaller in some of the smaller communities in the province. In a place like Bancroft or a place like Picton, for instance, in my riding, this bill might actually compel competitors to provide each other with financial information that could harm their ability to compete with each other a little further on down the line. This is something that we need to have addressed at the committee stage so that we can make sure we're bringing this bill forward in the best interests of everybody who's involved.

I should say that the biggest culprit for violating prompt payment sometimes is the government ministries and agencies. Bringing those agencies into compliance with prompt payment standards should be our goal in this bill as well, if you know what I mean, Speaker.

Listen: The bottom line is, if you do the work, you should get paid. I'm happy to support Bill 69 here at second reading. We'll get it to committee and we'll fix it for you, Ian.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act. I would also like to commend my colleague from Vaughan for his tireless work on this issue on behalf of his constituents, and I guess I will congratulate also all the other members who wanted to present this bill.

Mr. Speaker, during my tenure as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I was able to build fairly strong working relationships with many of the stakeholders in the construction industry who are affected by this bill. I believe that all here are well aware of the value of the construction industry in Ontario's economy. This industry employs hundreds of thousands of Ontarians and is the single largest investor in apprenticeships.

This is especially important in my riding of York South–Weston, where many people work in the trades and where many young people struggle to find good and meaningful jobs. Skilled trades and construction represent valuable opportunities for the youth in my community, and I hope that this bill will improve the opportunities that the industry offers them.

Because of my experience in the Ministry of Labour, I am also aware of some of the challenges that the industry faces, like late payments. Late payments, as we've heard, happen when an owner does not pay their contractors and subcontractors in an agreed-upon and timely fashion. This has very negative consequences not only for the industry, but for Ontario's economy as a whole. Late payment has many negative effects for the construction industry, including reduced employment, fewer apprenticeship opportunities, less investment in new equipment and higher construction costs, as contractors build uncertainty into their bids for projects, as we've heard from some of my colleagues.

Currently, there is no legislation in Ontario to protect contractors and subcontractors against late payments. Today, together, we have the opportunity to change that. As we've heard, when payment is delayed, it is the contractor or subcontractor who bears the brunt of that cost. Those who are the least able to afford the risk are the ones who are most vulnerable.

While Ontario is one of the most multicultural societies on earth—half of all immigrants to Canada settle here in Ontario and half of those settle here in the GTA and Toronto. Immigrants to Canada and Ontario have found, through the decades, many opportunities in the construction industry. I want to name the Italian community, the Portuguese community, the Chinese community, Spanish, South Asian—just to name a few.

Especially for newcomers and families who are settling in a new country, it's extremely important to receive those payments on time. They need to count on

that money that is owed to them. They need to pay their bills. They need to pay their rent. They need to feed their families. This creates uncertainty in their lives, and this bill would help them avoid that.

There is wide support for this legislation. I know that some stakeholders, like the Ontario Home Builders' Association, would like to have some clarification with regard to the level of disclosure, the right to financial information that is contained, and I think that can be done in committee.

I'm proud to support this bill and I hope that all my colleagues will as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise to speak today on Bill 69. There's merit to discussing amendments to legislation that would promote prompt payments in the construction industry. We must ensure that there is a fair, competitive business environment.

I must remind the member from Vaughan, although progress payments sound great in principle, contracts are developed and agreed to upfront and signed by both parties, and regulations to allow for arbitrary changes to such contracts are both dangerous and prone to unintended consequences. There is a court system for righting wrongs, but the member wishes that the issue of non-payment of construction work would be taken out of that system. We can discuss that in committee.

I believe that through some work at committee, and with input from stakeholders and industry experts, we can make improvements to this bill that would alleviate the concerns of all parties. Consumers and contractors must be able to negotiate the best payment plans that suit their needs.

The second issue I have with this bill is the mandatory disclosure of financial information to the contractor, who may very well be his competitor. It is a competitive world out there, and the issues must be worked out upfront. If they can't, the contractor could take a simple pass on the project. This is a serious privacy issue and could be removed without affecting the overall main purpose of this bill.

Speaker, this is a typical Liberal assumption—that everybody operates in the same out-of-touch and irresponsible manner that they do: Contract first and ask questions later, just like at eHealth and Ornge; or contract first and negotiate later, like we've seen in the power plant cancellations.

Overall, Ontario businesses have a long record of acting responsibly, and any new legislation should be designed to weed out bad apples and leave the law-abiding businesses alone, getting out of their way and making our market competitive again so they can be successful. For, after all, when business is successful, they tend to grow, hire more employees. Speaker, is that not our goal? Everybody wins.

1630

Do you know what the real complaint of the construction industry is? It's this Wynne-McGuinty government.

Through high taxes, skyrocketing energy prices and over-regulation, it has depressed consumer spending power and contractors' bottom lines. If the member from Vaughan really cares about contractors and employees, and honest transactions, he would demand that his House leader would call our want of confidence motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Vaughan, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I don't have a lot of time to wrap up, and there were lots of fantastic comments made by members on all sides of the House. I want to thank the member from Barrie; the members from Davenport, Mississauga East-Cooksville, of course; the member from Durham; the member from Trinity-Spadina for his impassioned statements around this bill and some of his feelings with respect to some of the other associations that exist out there; my seatmate, the member from Scarborough-Agincourt; the member from Prince Edward-Hastings; of course, the member from York South-Weston; and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. I also want to say thanks to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, who spent some time here with me in the chamber today and has taken a particular interest with respect to this bill. I look forward to working with members on this side and all sides of the House. I look forward to working with members of the construction industry and the minister and his ministry to see if we can move this along.

The only thing I would add is that I know that some comments and some concerns were raised by members of the official opposition. I respect their concerns, and I certainly respect the concerns articulated by the Home Builders' Association, but one thing that I would point out—and of course, this can certainly be dealt with in committee if we get past this stage today: With respect to the information that this proposed legislation seeks to have disclosed in order to make sure that payment does flow properly, I think it's important to note that that information would be under strict confidentiality rules, and anyone who sought to breach that confidentiality would be liable for damages sustained by the breach. I think that's an important thing to note.

The second thing that I would mention is I believe the member from Prince Edward-Hastings talked about how the government of Ontario, as a buyer of construction, may have some work to do with respect to prompt payment itself. I would note as well that Bill 69, as currently proposed, does include the crown itself. The crown would be bound by this bill as it's currently proposed.

I look forward, hopefully, to having this bill go to committee so that we can deal with all of these details at the committee stage, and I would thank all the members for their comments today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE MOIS

DU PATRIMOINE SIKH

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 25, standing in the name of Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh has moved second reading of Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Can I refer this bill to social policy, please?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliot has moved private member's notice of motion number 29.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES PAIEMENTS RAPIDES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Del Duca has moved second reading of Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 33 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 33 be waived. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 27, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1636.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Emie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
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Soo Wong
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Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
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des comptes publics**

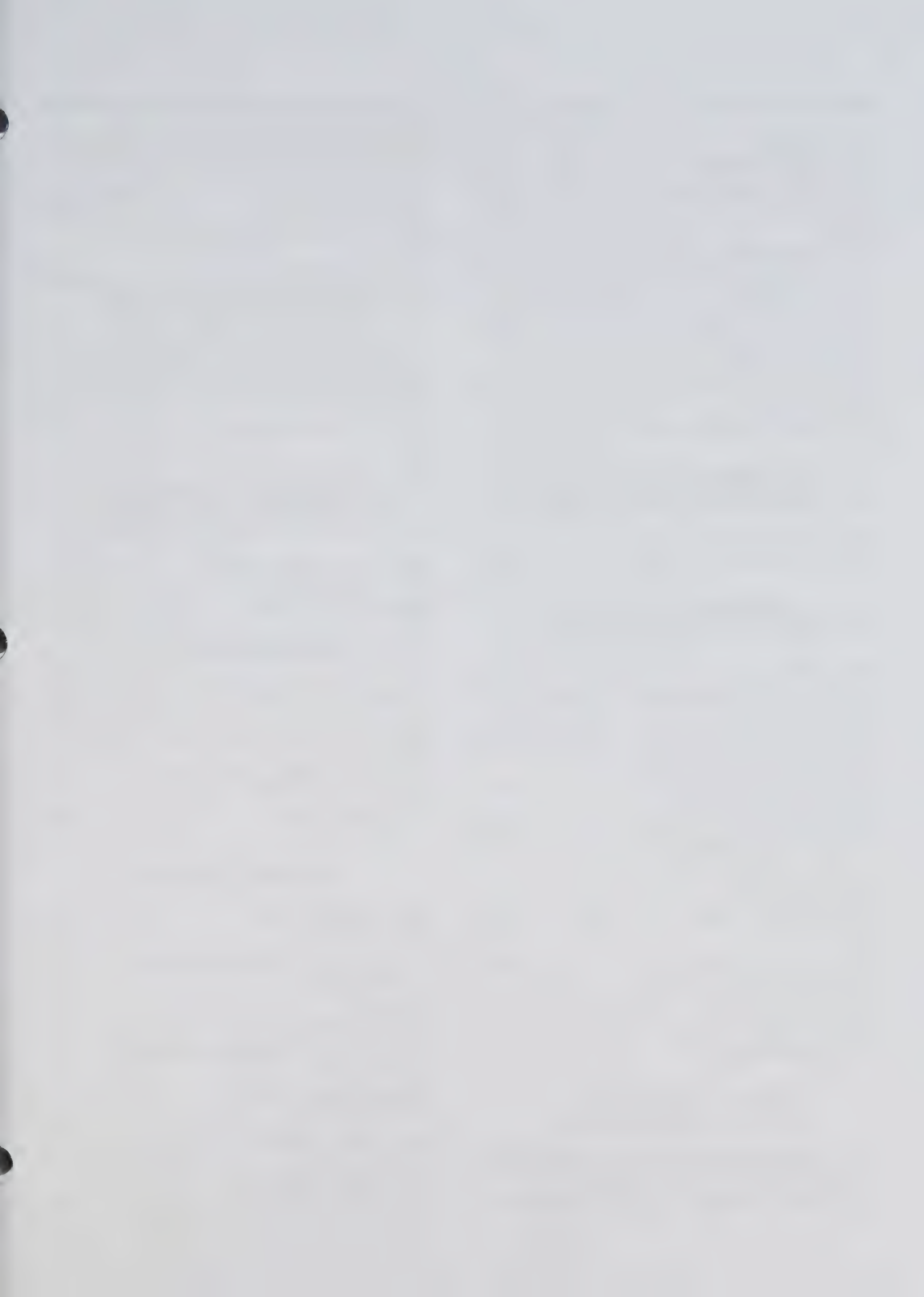
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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First reading agreed to

Mr. Michael Harris

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Mr. Colle

First reading agreed to

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No. 44

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 May 2013

Lundi 27 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 mai 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park. In the members' gallery are Don Taylor, Bryan Van Geest and Jordan Kniaziew; as well as Rej Picard, the outgoing chair, who has done an outstanding job for the sector; and Jan VanderHout, the new chair, who we look forward to working with. I hope all members will join them after question period in room 228 for a great greenhouse-grown vegetable.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know everyone will want to join in welcoming the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to Queen's Park today: Dan Darling, the president; Dave Stewart, executive director; and Joe Hill, one of the directors. I know that we'll be joining them on the lawn at Queen's Park for the barbecue.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like everyone to welcome a young lady who's shadowing me today, Burgundy Weber, from the Orillia area. She's in the audience here in the members' gallery.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm happy to rise in my place today and recognize that in the east public gallery there are, I believe, four classes of grade 10 civics students from St. Joan of Arc high school in Maple in my riding. I'm happy that they're here today and happy I had the chance to meet them one the main staircase just a few minutes ago. I hope they thoroughly enjoy question period.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure today to welcome Steve Eby to Queen's Park. Steve is a wonderful ambassador for the cattlemen's association and he's a proud cattleman from Bruce county.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to introduce Jessica del Rosso, who's shadowing me today. Jessica is a strong mentor for youth in care in Kitchener-Waterloo at our Family and Children's Services. This is her first time to Queen's Park, today.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Mrs. Sakineh and Mr. Ali Reza Mobasser, sitting in the east gallery.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Bill Herron, also from the Beef Farmers of Ontario, a long-time advocate for the beef industry.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of my New Democratic colleagues, I'd also like to welcome the cattlemen, soon to be the Beef Farmers of Ontario. I'd especially like to welcome Matt Bowman; I'm sure he'd rather be seeding today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please welcome to the Legislative Assembly Louis and Teresa Marie Sapi, the managing partner at HS & Partners chartered accountants. They're here, having support of Windfall Basics, a fantastic charity. Thank you for being here as part of your foundation, the Charger Foundation.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to introduce a few guests today, Kim Nesbitt and Adam Nesbitt from Burlington; and also from my riding, Pauline Jell and her husband, Geoffrey Jell, who is a World War II veteran and celebrating his 91st birthday today. Welcome.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome the mother of my page from Burlington, Eric Orosz: Heather Weaver-Orosz. She's here this morning in the public gallery.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to also welcome the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to Queen's Park and to recognize all those who are in the gallery, including President Dan Darling, Dave Stewart, the executive director, and Joe Hill. We were pleased to meet with them this morning, and I hope members will take time to speak to them at lunchtime and enjoy great Ontario corn-fed beef.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to introduce the mother of our page Hannah Lacey from Sarnia-Lambton. Her mother, Birgit Lacey, is in the gallery with her grandparents John and Diane Lacey from Ajax, Ontario. We welcome them this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The first one is Dundas—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, thank you.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. I have the pleasure to introduce Arden Schneckenburger from Morrisburg, a director of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

The member from Wellington-Halton Hills for an introduction.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to introduce representatives from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association who are here today: Dave Stewart, Joe Hill and Dan Darling.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome one of the directors of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to

Queen's Park today, Mr. Tom Wilson, from the riding of Samia-Lambton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from York South-Weston: Page Jessica Pontarollo's mother, Julie, is here. She will be here this morning and this afternoon, and we welcome her on behalf of the member.

Also, on behalf of the member from Oak Ridges-Markham: Page Alex Hu's mother, Feng Shao, will be here this morning, and we welcome her on behalf of the member.

We have in the Speaker's gallery today, a delegation of Japanese educators from northern Japan, led by Mr. Shizuhiro Shibata. We welcome you and thank you for being here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good morning, everyone. My question is for the Premier. You're not an elected Premier. You hold office because about 1,000 Liberal partisans voted for you. But you use that office to hold Ontarians hostage by buying union peace with one-off deals. Now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Order. I actually hear it coming from both sides, so we could bring it down, please, so the question can be put.

Member?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Recently the LCBO and OPSEU's liquor board employee division reached an accord averting a strike right before the May long weekend. The LCBO had empty shelves and lineups out the door while racking up sales that topped \$28 million that day. The whole thing was a scare tactic used to boost revenues and manipulate your government because OPSEU knows your track record.

OPSEU's ratification vote is set for June 3, but a copy of the collective agreement's highlights is posted on their website. It says the four-year deal includes a so-called wage freeze. But Premier, it's smoke and mirrors because there are signing bonuses of \$9 million. Now, Premier, how can you call it a wage freeze while handing out \$9 million in signing bonuses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I would just say that in terms of my status as an elected member and as the Premier, the people of Don Valley West certainly did elect me and it seems to me that there was a convention and that the party elected me, so I hold this position with pride and I'm doing everything in my power to work for the people of Ontario.

On the issues of the agreement with the employees at the LCBO, I'm not going to speak to the specifics; I understand that the ratification vote is going to happen. But we have worked very hard to make sure that all of

the settlements fall within the parameters that we outlined, and that is wage constraint. My understanding is that the agreement fell within those parameters.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You refuse to admit, Premier, that you're in over your head and that you've lost control while Ontarians continue to pay for this nonsense.

The one thing I believe you are consistent about is deflection, so I say enough is enough. You and your government have been caving to union demands on the backs of Ontario taxpayers for the last nine and a half years. Here's what you said in this House on March 4: "We've been very clear that constraining public sector wages is part of what we are doing and will continue to do. That's why we're on target. The Drummond report said that if we didn't take those measures, if we didn't work to constrain costs, then we would not be able to balance the budget." Accurate quote, Premier, and accurate answer.

Premier, you are neither constraining costs nor on target to balance the budget. We both know that. Why don't taxpayers know about the full cost of your backroom union deals? Will the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals make these deals public today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just have to counter what the member opposite said, in terms of our being on track to balance the budget. We've overachieved on our deficit reduction targets every single year, so we are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

With regard to public sector wages, let me just talk about some negotiated agreements that are in the public realm: with the English Catholic teachers and AFO, the French teachers, we realized a total savings of \$2 billion over three years; AMAPCEO, 10,000 public service employees, 1,000 hours of bargaining, the savings there, \$24.6 million in 2012-13 and \$30.4 million in 2013-14; OMA, the Ontario Medical Association, 25,000 doctors, net savings of almost \$400 million over two years.

We are constraining wages, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're on track—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, how can you stand here in the people's House and disregard facts and even your own words? You've always put union bosses and partisan interests ahead of taxpayers. With over 50% of the Ontario budget going to government worker salaries, you cannot achieve restraint without an across-the-board wage freeze, as I proposed in Bill 5, which has passed second reading.

According to OPSEU's website, your most recent deal also includes general wage increases for 2015 and 2016 at roughly 2% per year, and in case of privatization or closure of an establishment, part-time employees would now receive \$2,000 for employee transition, which is up from \$1,000 under the previous agreement.

Who but you could call this a wage freeze? The unions know what's in the agreements. The Liberals know what's in the agreements. Why don't the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to speak to the nub of this question, which I think is really, "Do you want to work with organized labour or not? Do you believe that working with people who are collectively bargaining is a good idea or not?" We think it's a good idea. We think it's a good idea to honour the collective bargaining process, to work with employees of government, to make sure that we set very clear parameters and that we work within those parameters, but that we do work in that collective bargaining process in good faith, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that the member opposite does not agree with that position. The member opposite would undermine labour in the province. The member opposite does not believe—if I can say, from their behaviour, they do not believe in working with employees who are in collective bargaining situations. We do, and that's the work that we've been doing.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Peter Shurman: "Working with" doesn't mean caving in.

Back to the Premier: Ontarians are left shaking their heads. Ontarians expect transparency and accountability from elected officials. They aren't getting that from you or from your cronies. You put union bosses and Liberal Party interests ahead of taxpayers—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Member from Timmins—James Bay, come to order.

Mr. Peter Shurman: —and because you cannot control any of this, an arbitrator has raised hospital costs by awarding SEIU a 4% increase over two years, while you stand here and say that you're reining in spending. Your Liberal government has created a new elite workforce in the public sector, complete with gold-plated pensions, greater job security and higher wages than the rest of Ontarians—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Peter Shurman: —who work to pay for those salaries and will never, never receive such luxurious benefits. Your only balancing act is to say one thing and do another, Premier.

How are you going to balance the budget when you keep spending beyond our means?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I find it very curious that the member opposite is talking about wage restraint, and yet when we were there to try to resolve issues with the doctors, to resolve issues with teachers, to resolve issues with regard to generic drugs, you stood idle. We had to take some tough decisions. We moved forward on moving that bar to control our spending. As a result, our spending is below 1% year-over-year growth.

When it comes to these wages and the dealings that we had with the LCBO, I'm very proud of the negotiations that our teams did to create a wage freeze over the next

two years. What matters here are results, and the results are that we are having a zero-zero wage freeze over the next two years, and we're creating co-operation and collaboration with all stakeholders because a collective agreement, a negotiated agreement, is the right way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: If you guys take a tough decision, I'll eat my hat.

Look, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. This morning alone, you've attempted to pull the wool over Ontarians' eyes twice. You cannot sugar-coat the facts. With over 50% of the budget going to government workers' salaries, this is a serious issue that your government has demonstrated it does not know how to handle. Instead, Ontarians keep learning about wasted tax dollars through the lack of transparency and accountability evident in eHealth, Ornge and, more recently, diluted cancer treatments.

Premier, Finance Minister, how many times do we have to ask? How are you going to balance the budget when you keep spending like drunken sailors just to keep up with your unions?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Tea Party thrives over there. They're looking to bust unions at all costs.

What we need is a collaborative effort. We need to work closely for the benefit of taxpayers. That's what's resulting in our budget, and that is what has occurred over the last couple of years. Even arbitrated deals are coming in at zero-zero. We will continue to work with all partners, we will continue to respect the collective agreements, and we will continue to work towards the benefit of the province in the end, because ultimately that's what we want.

Respectfully, we don't need to have continuing fights on constitutional debates and issues that will polarize us even further. We need to co-operate. We need to work for the benefit of all of Ontario, and we'll work with you for that matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: If the Tea Party's thriving over here, I'm going to say that socialism is thriving over there. You constantly kowtow to the unions. You just caved in to multiple NDP demands that will cost \$1 billion-plus annually. Finance Minister, your track record speaks for itself. You only know how to put party politics ahead of taxpayers' interests, and you're wrapped around far too many fingers. It's that simple.

The cost of doing business in backroom deals with the Liberal Party at the expense of taxpayers has been detrimental to Ontario's economy. With all of these backroom deals, now Ontario is facing the highest debt in history, and the finance minister knows it. Ontario taxpayers cannot continue to foot the bill for your party's political games and for your pandering. When will you and your party finally admit that you're in over your heads and you don't actually have a way out?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that our track record does speak for itself. That is

why we have a deficit that's \$5 billion lower than originally projected. That's why, next year, our projected deficit is another billion dollars down, and we will continue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We will continue to be disciplined. We will continue to constrain our spending as necessary. We have made every effort to maintain it below 1% year over year, and that has been proven by our track record. In fact, even our negotiated settlements within the envelope that we've identified have also been met.

It would be nice if the official opposition would also work in a minority government as does the third party for the benefit of the people of Ontario. This budget reflects the entire scope of Ontario's issues. It's for the people of Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has now received the report from Metrolinx calling for higher taxes and an increase in the gasoline tax. Is the Liberal government planning to proceed with these plans?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We all knew that the Metrolinx report was going to be coming out. I want to thank the Metrolinx folks, the board, for their work in putting together this report. We are committed to finding real solutions. I know that the congestion situation in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area cannot be allowed to continue, and so it is absolutely critical that we have a dedicated revenue stream. The Metrolinx investment strategy is one part of that conversation that is happening. There are other possibilities, but we will be taking the Metrolinx report under advisement and we'll be engaging with the people of the province about how we make sure that we have a dedicated revenue stream, particularly in the greater Toronto and Hamilton region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has argued that in difficult times people have to make sacrifices and may have to pay more to get Ontario moving. Can the Premier tell us how much the Liberal government has spent cutting taxes for the corporate sector over the last five years or so?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just stay on the transit issue for a moment because I know that the leader of the third party is concerned about how this process will roll out. She knows that we have been clear that the Legislature will have a say as we make a final decision on those revenue tools because it is extremely important that we have a debate outside of this House and within this House about the future of infrastructure, particularly transit infrastructure, in the next 20 years in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, because the state of transit

and the reduction of congestion in this region are paramount in terms of the possibilities for economic growth for the region and for the province. It's paramount in terms of improving people's quality of life. That's why it's so important that we get this right, and there will be an opportunity for the Legislature to have a say on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One calculation—in fact, several calculations—put the amount of money that this government has given to corporations in cuts into the billions since they became government, and the government insists that as soon as the books are balanced they plan to cut corporate taxes even more here in the province of Ontario.

The Liberals used the word “fair” in the budget. Does the Premier think it's fair to ask people to pay more out of household budgets while the Liberal government tells Ontario's largest corporations that they're due for yet another break?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what I think is fair: I think what is fair is to be honest with the people of Ontario about the complexity of our situation, to recognize that government has to do more than one thing at a time, that government has to create the conditions for businesses to be able to thrive so that those businesses can create jobs.

At the same time, government has to understand that people are spending too much time on the road trying to get to work, trying to get to their kids and bringing them home from school or taking them to day care, and that those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Carry on. Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Those issues and challenges coexist, and so we have to deal with all of that at the same time. We have worked to try to put conditions in place so that business can thrive, and at the same time we need to deal with congestion in the GTHA.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. The day before the budget, the government wrote to Ottawa asking them to delay a plan to open new corporate tax loopholes. This new loophole will allow Ontario's largest corporations to get the HST off of their expenses—expenses like gasoline. Has the Premier received a response yet?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member opposite knows, I presume, it's not a tax loophole. It's not something new. It's not a tax break. It is part of a negotiated agreement that we made when we did the HST and we made the transformation. It applies not only to entertainment and meals; it applies to equipment purchases, automobiles and a number of other equipment—telecommunications and so forth—and it expires over a period of time.

We've now asked the federal government to allow that expiration to continue so that we also benefit from those revenues, but it is something that we have to do in co-operation with the federal government, as do other provinces that have negotiated the same thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's usually a duck. It's a tax loophole and it's a tax break; that's exactly what it is.

The government signed an agreement. The minister's right; he signed an agreement that said that Ontario's largest corporations don't have to pay HST on expenses like gasoline, and that new tax loophole is going to open very shortly. Jim Flaherty is making it clear that he's going to hold the government to their agreement that they signed. The government's public estimates—the government's public estimates—peg this new loophole at a cost of \$1.3 billion a year.

Does the Premier think it's fair to ask families who are already paying the new HST on gasoline to now pay an additional fee every time they have to fill up, while Ontario's largest corporations get a tax break when they roll up to the pumps?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Minister of Finance has to pass it back, if that's going to happen.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, over to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thought it was a new question. Sorry.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So we agree. I've made it clear that we are bringing it forward to the federal minister. We've asked for this to be reviewed. We recognize the concerns raised by the third party. We've had this discussion, and we're continuing to do so.

I should clarify, though, that the number brought forward is not to that extent, because if you're dealing with just meals and entertainment, it's much less. It's around two to three or—it doesn't matter what it is; what matters is that we want to consider doing the extension. But it's not \$1.3 billion, as is being brought forward by the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it matters to Ontarians. It matters to Ontarians, I have to say.

New Democrats have been very clear: Ontarians deserve transportation infrastructure and transit that is accessible and gets people where they need to go, when they need to be there. But we've also been clear that we will need a fair and balanced way to pay for it.

This Premier put the word "fair" in the name of her budget. Talk is easy; action is tougher, Speaker. The Liberal government is handing tax breaks worth billions of dollars to Ontario's wealthiest corporations, while fam-

ilies who have already been whacked with an unfair HST are being told that they have to pony up yet again. Does the Premier really think that that's fair?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The exemption continues. That hasn't expired as yet. We're trying to negotiate and work with the federal government to extend it. Those are the discussions that we're having.

But we have taken other measures in order to be balanced and fair. We've taken a number of measures to invest in our young people, to invest in health care and education, and we're continuing to do what's necessary to support those most vulnerable by not penalizing them when they go to work.

What we want to do is be fair to all Ontarians. We also want to stimulate growth. We want to ensure businesses are investing in Ontario, and we will continue to do that as well.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Last week at the justice committee, we saw more damning documents, as your hand-picked finance minister testified.

Finance ministry estimates from last February show the Liberals were setting aside \$900 million for the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellations. The documents prove it was well known within the Liberal government that the cancellation costs would be higher than the \$40 million and \$190 million that you claim.

Premier, you were at the cabinet table when cancellations were discussed, and you knew the costs would be higher. Will you admit today the exact date when you knew the Oakville cancellation was higher than the \$40 million you continue to claim?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered these questions at committee. The OPA provided varying costs. The costs changed. The complexity and changing OPA estimates, I think, justify my asking the Auditor General to look at both situations.

I've been very clear that we wanted to open up this process and make it possible for all of these questions to be asked, but the reality is, there was no firm number. No one had access to a specific number. The numbers changed, the estimates changed, and I answered that at committee.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, the questions are being asked, but we're still not getting the answers.

At committee, we saw that the Liberal strategy of ditching, diverting and destroying documents continues; it's alive and well, Speaker. The same \$900-million document had a key piece of information missing: It was missing the critical footnote that explained the \$900-million risk. We found it in another document. We found it in another version; that's how we knew it existed. Obviously, somebody forgot to white out all of the documents. It's the same old tricks from the same old Liberal government.

Then again, every other Liberal who has come before the justice committee has failed to be forthright. I'll ask you again, Premier: Will you pledge today to return to the justice committee and tell us when you knew the Oakville cancellation cost was more than \$40 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This is absolutely outrageous. The honourable member is standing up and saying that we redacted a document that he had. The fact of the matter is, the footnote—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order. I may just jump right to a warning if he wants to continue.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The committee requested all drafts of a document. They received various drafts of the document. He had many copies of the same document. The footnote he's referring to was in the document that we gave to him, and the fact of the matter is that what it was was a cost estimate, a worst-case scenario from a finance official months and months before negotiations were wrapped up.

The real question is, why would the Leader of the Opposition not tell us his estimates when he made the exact same commitment?

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. At committee last week, we had a document that indicated that, in fact, when it came to the Oakville gas plant, the TransCanada credit—the TransCanada pipeline, I should say—was in force majeure, which meant to say that you could have cancelled that gas plant without costing a nickel to the taxpayers of Ontario if you would have only taken your time and done what your ministry officials were encouraging you to do. Why didn't you do that, and why instead did you choose to do something that cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's important that we go through the situation here. The city of Oakville had been trying to block the creation of this gas plant, but we knew that TransCanada was going to fight any attempts to block it and that it was much better for us to sit down and negotiate.

I'd remind, Mr. Speaker, of the testimony of Chris Breen of TransCanada Energy, who had this to say to the committee: "We were already before two different courts with what looks like about four actions, and we were before the OMB, the Ontario Municipal Board, with two appeals. We had a contractual obligation. It was very clearly spelled out in black and white that that was our responsibility: 'You have to go through every possible channel to deliver on your obligations in this contract.' And we would have done that."

We took the prudent course in negotiating with TCE in order to find an agreement on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're right; the municipality of Oakville was not giving the permits necessary to allow that project to go forward, and they were in force majeure. All you had to do to save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars was to in fact not do what you ended up doing in regard to this negotiation. It seems to me and it seems to most people that what you did is what Liberals are really good at: You took the interests of the Liberal Party first instead of taking the interests of the people of Ontario.

I ask you again: Why would you choose an option that cost us hundreds of millions of dollars when you could have gotten out of this a heck of a lot cheaper, if not having to spend anything at all?

Hon. John Milloy: I know that the honourable member would never want to leave the impression with this House that if those bylaws had been overturned—and I just produced a quote of the number of legal cases that were going—construction of the plant would have been undertaken and the government at that point would have been in negotiations that would have cost a lot more than sitting down at the beginning of the process.

The fact of the matter was that TCE was going to pursue every avenue in order to start construction on that plant, and the prudent course, which has been confirmed by numerous witnesses in front of the committee, was for us to sit down and negotiate. We took the prudent course. We looked at what was going to be happening with the bylaws in Oakville, and as I say, had they been overturned, construction would have begun.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month. This month, we acknowledge the long and rich history of Asian Canadians and their contributions to Canada. It also provides an opportunity for Canadians across the country to reflect on and celebrate the contributions of Canadians of Asian heritage to the growth and prosperity of Canada.

This month is important because Canada's cultural diversity strengthens the country socially, politically and economically in innumerable ways.

My riding of Scarborough-Rouge River is the home of many Asians, coming from all across the continent for numerous reasons. I'm proud to represent each and every one of them.

During this month, there are many local events to mark Asian Heritage Month. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please update us on the ways our government is highlighting Asian Heritage Month here in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for asking.

Last week, I had the pleasure to meet the vice-governor of Jiangsu province from China and discussed with him the screening of a Chinese film showcase at this

year's Toronto International Film Festival. It will feature 80 films tracing the connections between the cinemas of mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

It also speaks to the significant investment our government has made for the film industry, which contributes \$2.5 billion annually to our economy. Since 2003, we've invested over \$81 million to support screen-based industries, including more than \$58 million in funding to TIFF.

Our government is proud of these investments and the cultural films that celebrate Asian heritage and support Ontario's screen-based industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is interesting to hear of these initiatives from the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport regarding the ways our government is highlighting Asian Heritage Month.

It is important to recognize that our connection to Asia should not be limited to the events during this special month only. Asia is quickly becoming the world's economic engine, and more and more of our province's trade and immigration come from countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines and China.

Ontario's relationship with China is of particular interest to my constituents. Many of them enjoy hearing about our government's partnership with China on new economic ties. Speaker, could the minister please update the House on the status of Ontario's relationship with China?

Hon. Michael Chan: Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Ontario and China have for many years enjoyed a close friendship and growing economic relationship. China is our second-largest trading partner in the world, and two-way trade between Ontario and China stands at nearly \$30 billion a year. Our exports to China have increased by 233% since 2003. We've also had significant cultural connection, with nearly 650,000 Chinese Canadians calling Ontario home.

To build on these ties, just as one example, Ontario has been working very closely with the Chinese province of Jiangsu, our sister province in China. Last week, I too had the privilege of meeting a delegation from Jiangsu province that included the vice-governor, Mr. Fan Jinlong.

This visit and the Ontario visit to China earlier this year have strengthened our friendship and improved business collaboration in key sectors such as clean technology, agriculture and scientific research. We look forward to that continued friendship and more trade.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the finance minister. The cost of your gas plant cancellations was listed in public accounts at close to \$200 million, yet the very real possibility of a \$900-million price tag—passed on to all Ontarians—was nowhere to be found in the estimates.

Someone in the government, God love them, had the foresight to realize that this could cost \$900 million. Leading energy experts testifying before the justice committee under oath, along with the documents reluctantly handed over, confirm that number too—which raises a very important but simple question for the finance minister: Is there a public budget and a secret budget? If so, was the secret budget deal made available to the leader of the third party when she decided to prop up your scandal-plagued government?

1110

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. To the member opposite, you've just clarified your answer by saying that it was a provision; it was an estimate; it was appropriate to look at the worst-case scenario. Negotiations were had, resolutions were made, and public accounts were accounted for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Actually, Minister, it wasn't in the estimates—that's what I said—and you haven't clarified a thing, actually.

On Thursday, in justice committee, I asked the finance minister where the money came from with respect to the cancellations of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants. His response: "Oh, it probably came through our contingency funds."

The Premier of the province called this gas plant scandal a political decision. I don't think the people of Ontario had a seat-saver program in mind when the contingency fund was implemented. What the minister is telling us is that he has no problem pulling money from a contingency fund that exists in cases of unforeseen emergencies and natural disasters and using it to hide line items for his own sordid political scandals. He has no problem using that fund, even if it means hiding \$900 million from the people of Ontario for as long as possible in order to save his own seat.

Your government talks a good game about being open and transparent. Can you tell us why you hid this scandal in your contingency fund?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the PCs have presented—they're deliberately misleading documents from the Ministry of Finance—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I withdraw.

They've presented information that inappropriately reflects what's going on. Projected costs from the Ministry of Finance are part of a due diligence process in which officials plan for a worst-case scenario. The figures discussed by the opposition are several years old and are related to an assessment of potential liabilities, not projected costs.

A complete cancellation of the plant, as promised by the Conservatives and their candidates in Mississauga, may have also resulted in these liabilities becoming a reality. Successful negotiations by the government to relocate these plants ensured that these potential liabilities did not come to fruition.

Citing these figures from the Ministry of Finance of a risk assessment of several years past is unconstructive.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Just a few weeks ago, this government finally committed to our NDP proposal to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%. But recently I've heard from a number of people that they're seeing their insurance premiums increase by 15% to 20% upon renewal. These are people with absolutely clean records and no claims whatsoever. Why would this government, through FSCO, allow insurance companies to increase premiums for people across Ontario when we know that a 15% reduction should be implemented?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, let me say that I'm very pleased that we were able to work with the NDP on this proposal. We were committed to reducing premiums for auto insurance, Mr. Speaker. It's something that, over a year ago, I talked about in my own riding. It's something that we are working on, and we're doing it in a way that I think will be prudent.

The member opposite has highlighted why it's so important that we get the budget passed: because, in order to be able to implement the budget, it needs to pass through the process in this Legislature. I appreciate the concern from the member opposite, but we really do need to get on with getting the budget passed so we can implement it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again to the Premier: People in my community and across Ontario are paying some of the highest premiums in Canada. These are tough times. Families are struggling to make ends meet.

This government said that they will take our NDP proposal to reduce auto insurance rates by 15% to make life more affordable. How many times will this government allow insurance companies to increase premiums before they actually implement that 15% reduction?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the work being done by the member opposite in facilitating us to get this passed so that we can work towards reducing auto insurance rates for the benefit of all Ontarians. It should be noted that in the recent year, actually, auto insurance has been reduced by 0.3% as a result of the efforts we've done with the task force, and we'll continue to do so.

It's important that we have FSCO, which is reviewing all of the submissions that are being made to date, avoid the variation that the member opposite has cited. We will work together. Let's get this budget passed. Let's move on this quickly.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Our government recognizes that Ontario's capacity to compete in the

global economy depends on how well we can harness our research strengths, our ability to encourage innovation and the support we provide our entrepreneurs. Our government's budget reiterates our commitment to research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Our commitments are strong. We have invested \$50 million in the Ontario Venture Capital Fund to help support start-up companies. We have committed \$100 million to the Ontario Brain Institute, which will help make discoveries that tackle brain disease possible. And we will invest \$295 million in the youth jobs strategy to encourage entrepreneurship amongst our youth.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What other programs has the government invested in to support entrepreneurship and innovation in our province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Vaughan for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong track record of supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in this province. We have invested in three networks that have served entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises. These networks include the Ontario Network of Excellence, which supports the success of entrepreneurs; the Ontario network of Small Business Enterprise Centres, which works with municipal governments to accelerate the start-up and growth of local economies; and Business Advisory Services, which help entrepreneurs' businesses to grow both at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the investments our government has made to support entrepreneurship and innovation in order to grow our economy and create jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the Minister of Research and Innovation for the outstanding job that he's doing on behalf of all Ontarians.

Speaker, I am glad to hear that our government is investing in services and programs to assist our entrepreneurs. As you know, Speaker, entrepreneurs have the potential to bring Ontario's most promising ideas and research to the market. Through research, innovation and entrepreneurship, we can find the answers to our questions, generate economic growth and create jobs. Given the challenges in the global economy, it is more important than ever that we take action that helps turn great ideas into thriving companies and new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to ensure that entrepreneurs are getting the support they need and that the programs are easily accessible?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would again like to thank the member from Vaughan for that question. Entrepreneurship and innovation are at the heart of our efforts to create jobs and grow our economy. We want to help more Ontarians start up businesses and help their businesses prosper.

In order to ensure that entrepreneurs are able to access resources quickly, we have unified these three networks into the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs. Through the

Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, we will be able to provide better services to Ontarians by an interactive portal, onebusiness.ca. Mr. Speaker, through this initiative, Ontario entrepreneurs will be able to find the most appropriate sources of support to help them grow their businesses and also help our economy.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, for the past 10 years, your Liberal government has failed northern Ontario. With an 11.3% unemployment rate, North Bay, like much of northern Ontario, is in crisis.

One industry that is managing to succeed is contact call centres. On page 262 of the recent McGuinty-Wynne-Horwath budget, you announce the elimination of the apprenticeship training tax credit for only contact centres.

How can northern Ontario residents have any confidence in your government when you are planning to kill up to 8,000 important jobs in northern Ontario with this single decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the concerns. I know in the budget of 2012, we announced the effectiveness of the apprenticeship training tax credits, promoting them to provide for those apprentices to have full completion when they're working and to provide for full-time employment. The intent, of course, is to help people have jobs and maintain those jobs.

1120

What we're finding, though, is the eligibility requirements through the call centres have not resulted in completion of the apprenticeship program or in full-time employment, as expected. It's actually averaging only 10%, and frankly, I think we all agree in this House that what we want to do is provide our stimulus and investments to help those individuals have full-time employment for a long period of time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Northern Ontario has a jobs crisis, but so does London and southwestern Ontario. For the second straight month, London has the highest big-city unemployment rate in Canada, and shamefully, Windsor is right there too—11.3% unemployment in North Bay, 10% in London and 9.2% in Windsor.

Premier, Ontario has 600,000 unemployed men and women. Your budget does nothing to help grow our economy and create jobs. In fact, for the 25,000 people province-wide working in the contact calling industry, you have put their jobs at risk.

Premier, the PC Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, have unveiled a firm vision to get Ontario back on track. Which of the items outlined does your coalition government plan to implement?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to take the supplementary on this because—it was interesting, just a couple of months ago in Barrie, there was an announcement. I think the Barrie mayor said it was one of the best days that he had had as mayor, where they created 500 new jobs in a call centre that opened up there. I know they're also looking at Guelph as a possible additional area to expand.

But I want to talk about London—the London area, specifically—because I know that the member opposite is specifically interested in the London area—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex asked the question; I'm sure he wants to hear the answer, and he'll ask—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is warned.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As part of the over 400,000 jobs that we've created since the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon is not helping, either.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —the recession, I was in London and the London area. In fact, I was in the member opposite's own riding on Thursday, where I was announcing the government's \$300,000-support to our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontarians recently learned that during the Easter weekend, Mr. Joseph Cummins, an 80-year-old patient at London Health Sciences Centre, was told to clean his own toilet. This government insists that front-line staff cuts and hospital underfunding won't affect care.

Is letting people fend for themselves what the minister has in mind when she talks about transformation in health care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ontarians have the right to expect the highest-quality care no matter where they get care in this province. We are undertaking a tremendous transformation in our health care sector right now, and we are seeing the results of focusing on the community sector.

We're also really focusing on improving the quality of care in our hospitals. In fact, the unanimous passage of the Excellent Care for All Act celebrates and put us on the right path to continue to get better value by improving the quality of care in our health care sectors. Now, hospitals across the province are publicly reporting on quality indicators, and we are seeing quality improvements. We're on the right path. We have more to do for

sure, but I will never stop to continue to improve quality in our hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the minister says that people have the right to expect high quality of care; they're obviously not getting it. I guess they only have the right to expect it but not to actually get it.

Mr. Cummins happens to be a retired professor of genetics from Western University, but with the real threat of hospital-acquired infections, it doesn't take an expert to tell us that patients shouldn't be cleaning their own toilets. London Health Sciences is planning to lay off an additional 60 staff even as this government lets hospital CEO salaries skyrocket.

Can the minister assure the people of London that sick patients won't be cleaning their own toilets, or worse, as a result of her cuts in the hospital sector?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just to be clear, as I was saying earlier and I've said many times in this House, there is a very important transformation going on in our health care sector. While hospital budgets—the base budgets—are being kept to zero, we are heavily investing in the community sector.

The Premier was in London on Friday. We actually visited a family that exemplified the transformation that is under way. Because of our investment in the community sector, and thanks to the Home First philosophy that was being applied, Peggy and Norm were able to be in their own home, where they want to be, comfortable in their community, instead of in hospital, instead of in long-term care, which is where they would have been had these investments not been made.

That transformation is under way. I acknowledge hospitals are dealing with challenging decisions, but there is no question: The system is stronger.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Kim Craitor: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Premier in her role as the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Minister, this Sunday was a significant day in my riding of Niagara Falls, in Niagara-on-the-Lake and particularly Fort Erie. The Fort Erie Race Track opened for the 116th time in the season of 2013. I was there. I saw the largest-ever crowd for an opening day of the Fort Erie Race Track. It was an exciting time.

Each year, thousands of families come to the track to enjoy the festivities and the excitement that racing provides. I know first-hand that our government has been working with the horse racing transition panel to build a strong, sustainable horse racing industry.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order. Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I, along with my constituents, know the importance of this industry, and we are inter-

ested in making sure that it remains healthy and strong for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier in her role as the Minister of Agriculture and Food, could the minister please provide an update on what our government is doing to support the horse racing industry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls—I sincerely want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his support and advocacy on this file. He has been terrific.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to a sustainable and long future for Ontario's horse racing industry. We know how important the industry is to communities like Niagara Falls, but across Ontario. So I've asked the transition panel to develop a long-term plan to implement recommendations from its report, and by that, I mean the integration of horse racing with the OLG strategy and the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order—and while I'm at it, the member from Kawartha Lakes.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—and by that, Mr. Speaker, I mean that the Ministry of Finance and the OLG will work with stakeholders to work on the integration of horse racing within the modernization strategy.

I heard a voice from the other side saying, "Details," Mr. Speaker. That's the point. The point is that that integration strategy needs to be worked out, and that's what I've asked the panel to work on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you for your response, Minister. I'm glad to hear our government is committed to building a strong and sustainable horse racing industry.

I want to share with you that when I met with the transition panel, that was made up of three significant former members of Parliament, from each of the three parties, I sat with them, and they explained to me that the slots at the racetrack—they clearly said it was unaccountable, it was not transparent and it lacked a proper focus on customers. Their long-term plan will be very important, to look to the transition of the industry, to integrate horse racing with the modernization of Ontario's gaming strategy.

I'm thrilled that racing resumed this week in Fort Erie—so are the workers; so are the fans who came out. I know there are many other tracks in Ontario that have begun racing for 2013.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier in her role as the Minister of Agriculture and Food, could the minister please provide an update on the status of racing across tracks in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his excellent question.

Our government is actively working to ensure horse racing is sustainable and successful. Right now, the most important thing Ontarians could do is support this im-

portant industry and come out to the tracks on racing day. This week, there is racing at nine tracks across the province of Ontario.

1130

I was in attendance at Kawartha Downs for the opening of the 2013 season, and it was an excellent evening with a record crowd on Saturday, May 18. I must say, I made an investment; very little return, but that's okay. I encourage all members to visit their local track and to support this vibrant industry in rural Ontario.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, this weekend a guard at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre was sent to the hospital after he was attacked by an inmate. This represents just one more instance of violence that has been all too common at EMDC on your watch.

I met with you last August and you told me that your staff was working on implementing a 12-point action plan intended to mitigate the problems at EMDC. Since that time, overcrowding remains an issue, weekend lockdowns are regular, a fire broke out and a near-riot occurred. Reports indicate that you've been slow to implement your promised changes. Minister, will a guard have to die before you take decisive action on EMDC?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the member from the opposition for his advocacy to improve the situation in the EMDC. It's unfortunate when an incident like this happens. I'm not going to comment because there is a police investigation going on as we speak. As I told him in the past—and I also invited him to a briefing on what we are doing to improve the situation in the EMDC. Ministry officials continue to work with staff—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I tried one way. The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek is warned.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As I said, ministry officials continue to work with staff and their union to address their concerns through our action plan. The plan focuses on improving supervision and compliance with policy. These policies have been developed by corrections experts, and we are investing in 350 cameras at EMDC to better supervise and intervene when necessary. With the supplementary, I will continue to say what we are doing to improve the situation there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: A camera cannot intervene when they're beating up a guard.

Minister, the guards have their backs up against the wall and things continue to devolve. Broken metal from a light fixture that can be sharpened into a shank has not yet been totally recovered since the last near-riot at the jail, and I've been informed that the ministry has bought metal detectors, but they sit idle because they haven't provided any training to the staff on how to use them.

This is just one of the many examples that are going on with this gross mismanagement.

Any number of violent occurrences in the past year should have been a wake-up call for you, yet you're remaining asleep at the switch. Your inaction is putting guards' safety in jeopardy and lives at risk. Please, let's work together and stop a death from occurring at this jail.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I'll finish my sentence. The member from Huron—Bruce, the member was asking a question from your own caucus.

Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The health and safety of the correctional officers in our correctional facilities are of utmost importance, and I've been working very hard to make sure that they do improve.

Yes, there are drugs entering these facilities. There are other tools that should not enter facilities. So we are, as we speak, reviewing the process, reviewing who is doing and who is not doing their work there. That's why these situations occur. We'll continue to make sure that the 12-point plan is implemented, but the work cannot be done at all times, seven days a week, 24 hours a day—it takes longer, but we are determined that we will move forward. We have changed the direction, the leadership there, and we will implement a board of directors at this facility to make sure that things are improving.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Premier. Today is the launch of Bike Month in cities like Toronto, and it's a good day to remember that 600,000 people in Ontario bike every day.

According to a new survey from Share the Road, the vast majority of people in Ontario think that the provincial government should be investing more in bike lanes and cycling infrastructure. Quebec has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in provincial bike networks, but Ontario's motto on cycling seems to be, "Go slow."

Why are Ontarians still waiting for a new provincial bicycling strategy more than three years after you, as Minister of Transportation, promised a new strategy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for his very sincere question. These things are tied together. The cycling strategy is in its final stages of development, and we'll be making announcements very, very shortly. I don't want it to be lost on people that the Big Move and the investment strategy that Metrolinx released today is one of the funding mechanisms for a cycling strategy. We do not see the issues of transit, automobiles, trucks, bicycles and pedestrians as separate parts; we see it as an integrated approach, and we are setting money aside for integrating that transit.

I was recently at the Mount Joy GO Station, where, as part of GO, we are promoting cycling as the connection between GO trains and residents in those areas. So cycling continues to be an integrated part of our overall transportation strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I send my message back to the Premier. The Liberal government has had 10 years now to make cycling a priority. In 2010, the government's draft bike strategy promised funding for municipal bike infrastructure. Now, the government has back-pedaled, and it has removed this from the strategy.

The government has rejected calls to invest a mere 1% of its highway budget on bike lanes, and this government has now allowed Toronto to remove bike lanes on Jarvis without the environmental assessment that we asked for. Now this government has opposed simple measures to update the Highway Traffic Act so that streets are safe for all users.

When will this government finally make Ontario a leader rather than a laggard when it comes to cycling?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are paving shoulders now on secondary highways. I am a cyclist, as we are a two-bicycle, no-car household. I cycle across Ontario from Toronto to Montreal most summers doing fundraisers.

We are developing, on the provincial portion, a very sophisticated, well-put-together cycling infrastructure. The cycling strategy, along with the Big Move, will address that.

The other issues that the honourable member raised are decisions of a municipal nature. We are not involved in discussions around whether Ottawa, Cornwall or Toronto allocate cycling lanes. Those are municipal. Most municipalities have their own cycling strategies and their own cycling capacities.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. A lot of skilled tradespeople in my riding of Oakville are quite pleased with the way things are going with apprenticeship ratios these days and the progress that is being made. The Ontario College of Trades is a vital tool in promoting the importance of skilled trades.

Our government recognizes that Ontario's apprenticeship system is a key part of building the well-educated and the highly skilled workforce that this province needs to compete in the current and future economy. At the same time, we all hear about the shortage of skilled workers in our economy, and we believe the skilled trades are a tremendous career opportunity for young people. I still encourage many people in my riding of Oakville to pursue a career in the skilled trades.

As such, Speaker, through you to the minister: I ask if he is aware of actions being taken currently that promote skilled trades opportunities for young people in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to respond to that very good question. The College of Trades is mandated

to promote the skilled trades to our young people, and I'm looking forward to seeing those efforts as they move forward in that area. A number of government programs and incentives are geared to promoting the skilled trades and apprenticeships as well.

But I'd really like to share with the House an exciting initiative that was recently visited by our Premier, the Ontario Technological Skills Competition, which was held in Kitchener. I want to thank Gail Smyth, executive director of Skills Canada-Ontario, and her team for organizing this annual competition that engaged close to 2,000 young skilled trades competitors, as well as tens of thousands of other young people. This competition provides young people with exposure to the skilled trades.

I want to thank and recognize Gail Smyth and her team for their incredible passion, commitment and contribution to opening up the skilled trades to our young people through this event.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, the love of my life, my wife, Deanna Clark.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't know what it would have cost you if you didn't.

Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

It's now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CATTLE FARMERS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and welcome the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to Queen's Park and extend a sincere thank you for the delicious Ontario corned beef barbecue lunch we had this afternoon.

There are over 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario. Ontario cattle farmers are an integral part of our agricultural sector and richly contribute to the provincial economy.

The Ontario Cattlemen identified an industry need for a beef nutritionist at the University of Guelph, a position that existed until 2010. During last summer's drought, the beef industry was in great need of advice on alternative feeding solutions, as well as guidance on the safe use of drought-stressed corn. I'm proud to say that the Ontario PC caucus was listening and fully supports the return of a beef nutritionist to the University of Guelph. We included the Ontario Cattlemen's suggestion in our agricultural white paper entitled Respect for Rural Ontario.

The PC caucus looks forward to continuing to work with the Ontario Cattlemen to grow the beef industry. We

understand the importance of agriculture in Ontario and the importance of having a government that truly understands and supports the agricultural sector.

Again, I want to thank the Ontario Cattlemen's Association for visiting Queen's Park. A friendly reminder to my colleagues that it's barbecue season and you need to pick up some Ontario corn-fed beef for the grill.

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. John Vanthof: On Saturday, May 12, Joe Azoguar was eating breakfast at his cabin near Cochrane. He had just moved from Toronto to escape the chaos of the city. A black bear approached, killed his dog, broke into his home and attacked him as he tried to escape. Two passersby drove the animal off, called 911 and took Joe to the hospital, saving his life.

While bear attacks are rare, bear encounters in the north are common and increasing. There are those who think that bears are cute and cuddly, but an attack provides a reality check. Parents in some areas drive their children to school because of bears. Children are forced to stay in school because of bears on the playground. Bear sightings are on the increase this spring; because of the unusually long winter, animals are hungry and bolder than usual.

There was a time when the Ministry of Natural Resources took an active role in black bear management, but this role has all but disappeared. Last year, the government gutted the program that trapped and moved problem bears to other areas, and responsibility to control problem bears was downloaded to the police, so now the cost falls to municipalities.

Northerners feel abandoned and are forced to protect themselves, and as a result, many no longer bother reporting the results to the MNR.

Northerners need more than a 1-800 bear advice line. We already know to clean our barbecues. We need the provincial government to take our safety seriously and reimplement measures that actually protect people. Bears deserve respect, and so do northerners.

MING PAO DAILY NEWS

Ms. Soo Wong: It is with great pleasure that I rise in this House to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Toronto edition of Ming Pao. Ming Pao is a daily Chinese newspaper that serves many Chinese Canadians in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and throughout the greater Toronto area.

The original Hong Kong version of Ming Pao began print in May 1959 and was started by Louis Cha, and is well known for its social and intellectual content. In fact, Ming Pao was selected as the most credible local paper in a survey by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2006.

The Toronto edition was started on May 28, 1993. Admirably, the Toronto Ming Pao was able to break even within the first year of operation and has become widely read by Hong Kong immigrants.

The paper covers local news as well as news stories from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. There is no dispute that Ming Pao has brought brighter and higher standards of journalism to the Chinese community in Toronto, and Ming Pao has also played a significant role in bridging the East and West cultures.

Last, but not least, Ming Pao has helped newcomers integrate into Ontario society. It frequently reports on immigration policies and guidance on job postings, as well as promoting Canadian core values.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Ming Pao for their 20 successful years in Ontario, but more importantly for serving our community the best it can.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, who are here at Queen's Park today, and to recognize the hard work of all Ontario greenhouse growers.

Those who claim to support local food need to understand it doesn't start at the farm gate; it starts in the fields, barns and greenhouses across Ontario. It is the hard work of people like those who are here today that provides Ontario greenhouse vegetables and extends our growing season. It is the hard work these greenhouse growers do that makes the sector a significant economic driver in Ontario, with well over \$100 million in exports and investment of over \$2 billion in our rural economy.

Like many agriculture sectors, many of the challenges they're facing are created by this government, such as the increasing cost of hydro and red tape. I want to commend the greenhouse growers for coming to talk to the members about these issues and how we can help.

I want to recognize Rej Picard, who has been an outstanding chair. I appreciate that he has always provided us with information and ensured that we were aware of the challenges they are facing. He showed us the co-generation facilities, where they were having trouble getting contracts. He showed us the innovation that the sector was doing to become more environmental and more competitive.

I'm pleased that the new chair, Jan VanderHout, is someone already known for his innovation, such as using biomass combustion as a heat source and implementing environmental innovations. We look forward to continuing to work with Jan and the greenhouse sector.

EDUCATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This afternoon, I am very happy to talk about the next generation of Ontarians with the Legislature. On Wednesday, May 22, Andrea Horwath and I had the pleasure of touring Clarke Road Secondary School in London, Ontario, and meeting with a number of students in a general question-and-answer session.

After a brief tour of the school with Mr. Panayi, the principal, we were introduced to a number of students

who had given up their lunch hour in order to meet with us. We discussed many issues facing students today, including the First Start program, which addresses youth employment, as well as auto insurance rates, economic stimulus and job creation.

I was pleasantly surprised at the depth of knowledge these students demonstrated regarding the current political landscape. They seemed particularly well informed, and I was pleased to see the interest they were taking in important issues.

One student was concerned about pursuing post-secondary education, the high cost of tuition and, more importantly, the job prospects once they graduate. Another wanted to know about the opportunities offered by pursuing education in the skilled trades.

Mr. Speaker, the students at Clarke Road showed us that the young people of Ontario are watching. They see their province is in trouble, they are concerned about where we are going and they wonder if there is more that can be done.

I am so thankful to the students and the staff at Clarke Road Secondary School for taking the time to meet with Andrea and myself, and look forward to having further discussions with them in the future.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On May 10 this year, I had the honour of attending the official opening of Birchmount Woods, in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. The government of Canada, the government of Ontario and the city of Toronto celebrated the official opening of a 152-unit affordable housing rental project for low-income families, persons with special needs and victims of domestic abuse.

Having access to a safe and stable home improves people's quality of life. Speaking to new residents of the building, I was able to appreciate first-hand the far-reaching impact this will have on their lives and neighbourhood. We've been able to provide people in need with affordable and accessible places to live. We've provided them with a home and a community where they can live with dignity and be active members of that community.

1310

This investment of more than \$10 million in provincial and federal funding for the new residence helped to stimulate the local economy and created approximately 380 local jobs. It is the latest step in our government's plan to improve access to affordable housing for Ontarians.

Since 2003, nearly \$3 billion has been committed by our government to affordable housing. This is more than any government before us has done.

Please join me in recognizing the official opening of Birchmount Woods. It is remarkable that we can accomplish this much when all levels of government, the private sector and not-for-profit sectors work together. Through projects like this, together we can continue to

improve access to affordable housing that is safe, sound, suitable and sustainable for households across Ontario.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to speak to a very important issue, one that is of particular concern for northern Ontario.

Late last week, during her trip to Thunder Bay, the Premier made comments about the Ring of Fire, specifically pointing to the complex nature of the project. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is time that this House gets more specific information on this project.

There is a single page in this year's budget dedicated to the Ring of Fire, but it amounts to little more than lip service. It has been over a year since the former Minister of Northern Development and Mines announced, to great fanfare, that a deal was in place with Cliffs Natural Resources to get development in the Ring of Fire moving. In the time since this announcement, far more information has become available through the media than from the government or the ministry on what is being done to get the Ring of Fire moving.

While it is undoubtedly a complex file, there are many companies who have made significant investments in the region while waiting for the government to move forward on creating a physical link to the area.

Getting industry, First Nations and the federal and provincial governments working together is no easy task.

The current government has bragged about the Ring of Fire for years, dating back to Premier McGuinty's throne speech of 2007.

Developing the Ring of Fire is simply too important to push to the back burner on the government agenda, and this government needs to show that it is truly committed to making this great opportunity a job-creating reality that will benefit the entire province.

HELEN LU

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: On May 15, Helen Lu, known as the "mother of all charity," died at the age of 82 after an eight-month battle with cancer. A remarkable woman and a well-known pillar of the Chinese community, she will be sorely missed by many.

On behalf of the Legislature of Ontario, I want to offer our condolences to her husband, Yu-Che, her children, Henry and Shirley, and her niece Pey.

Born in Anhui, China, Helen and her family immigrated to Canada in 1969 from Taiwan. Affectionately known as Mama Lu, she worked tirelessly for many charities for over 30 years, including the Canadian Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry, the United Way, the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Hospital for Sick Children, the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, and the Yee Hong Community Wellness Foundation, where she also served on the board of directors. She also helped establish the Chinese Canadian Council of the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Helen worked on countless fundraising campaigns for natural disaster relief, from the tsunami in south Asia to the earthquake in Haiti and floods in China.

She received numerous awards, including the Order of Ontario in 2004 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, for her tremendous work.

Even while she was ill, Helen continued to advocate for her charities.

We may have lost an exceptional community leader, but I believe her legacy will continue to inspire us for a long time to come.

CASINO THOUSAND ISLANDS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on behalf of the people of the town of Gananoque and the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, and more than 400 people who work at the Thousand Islands casino.

As the government scrambles to control the damage from the latest debacle—the chaos at OLG and the disastrous modernization plan—I have some good news for the Premier.

Amidst all the chaos, Premier, there is one easy decision to make: Leave the Thousand Islands casino right where it is. Any objective look at the situation would reach the same conclusion. There is simply no case to be made for closing the sixth-largest employer in Leeds—Grenville and moving it to Kingston. OLG made the right decision for the right reasons when it opened the casino's doors more than a decade ago. The numbers prove it. This is the second-highest-grossing charity casino without a racetrack in Ontario.

The Thousand Islands casino worked because it's located in a community that wanted it and has embraced it ever since. That's not the case in Kingston, where 60% of residents oppose a casino and more than three quarters don't want one without a referendum first.

There's overwhelming evidence that rolling the dice on a Kingston casino is an economic and social disaster waiting to happen. That's why I'm calling on the Premier to direct whoever she brings in to clean up the mess at OLG to make that one easy decision: Leave the Thousand Islands casino where it is.

RENÉ BRUNELLE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. René Brunelle, a former member of this Legislature from Cochrane North from 1958 to 1981, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to have an up-to-five-minute tribute to René. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka on a point of order.

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for members to be able to wear the poppy, as Mr. Brunelle was a veteran and served in World War II.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka is asking for unanimous consent to wear the poppy as part of the tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

It is now time for those tributes. The member from—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Timmins—James Bay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just wanted you to say it. The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're gone a week and you forget our ridings. What's going on?

C'est avec plaisir que j'ai l'occasion de parler de quelqu'un qui était vu, comme on le dit, comme un des rois du Nord quand ça vient à être capable de travailler fort de la part du monde qui reste au nord-est de l'Ontario et au Nord en général.

J'ai eu l'occasion de connaître M. Brunelle—non en politique, parce qu'il est parti d'ici ça fait assez longtemps, avant que, moi, j'aie été élu. Il est parti d'ici en 1981. Mais j'ai eu l'occasion de parler à M. Brunelle à une couple d'occasions comme député provincial de Cochrane South, dans le temps, qui était le comté droit à côté de Cochrane-Nord, et éventuellement comme son député de Timmins—James Bay ou Timmins—Baie James, parce que, comme on le sait, les deux comtés ont été fusionnés.

Je vais vous dire, il n'y a personne que j'ai rencontré, au moins de cette place-ci, qui avait les habiletés de M. Brunelle «to be such a nice guy». C'était un gars qui, quand tu le rencontrais, était toujours voulant de te parler. Il était toujours une personne qui regardait au positif. C'était toujours une personne qui essayait de trouver des solutions à comment travailler ensemble. Puis, si tu étais néo-démocrate, libéral ou conservateur dans une élection, watch-toi parce qu'il savait comment faire sa politique dans les élections. Mais quand ça venait à travailler entre les élections, même après qu'il est parti de la politique, pour lui, ce qui était important c'était le monde chez eux. Il comprenait que pour lui, sa job était l'élu de la région, d'être là pour parler de la part du monde de notre région sur les questions qui sont importantes pour nous. M. Brunelle, je peux vous dire, était une personne qui savait comment faire ça.

On a eu l'occasion de travailler ensemble dans notre région, non seulement avec M. Brunelle mais avec d'autres. L'affaire qui venait toujours à travers—quand René était impliqué dans un dossier, on était toujours content parce que c'était un gars qui connaissait bien du monde, qui savait comment rassembler les troupes ensemble, comme on dit, pour être capable d'avancer—qu'on était ensemble capable de trouver des solutions à un problème.

Donc, je peux dire premièrement qu'il n'y a personne à qui je peux penser, qui vient de cette place-ci, qui avait la classe de M. René Brunelle. C'était un homme qui était excellent. C'était un humain qui avait une habileté excellente de travailler avec le monde et d'avoir du respect.

It's not often they talk nice about us in politics, but how can you say anything wrong about René? As I was just saying: just an amazing human being who understood what life was all about. Life was not just about the politics of what we do in this chamber; life was about how we leave this place a better place when we leave.

René understood that in northern Ontario we had challenges, as there are challenges in other parts of the province. He understood that our job as elected officials and our jobs as citizens is to try to find ways to advance those yardsticks forward so that when we leave this place, as unfortunately René had to do—as all of us will have to do at one time. He left this place a hell of a lot better.

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He has a family that was infinitely proud and still is infinitely proud of him—a loving father, a loving husband, a loving uncle, grandfather, neighbour—you name it. Everybody who came in contact with him understood that what René was doing at the end of the day really left us in a better place, and understood that that's what the call of service was all about. It wasn't about my ability to get a headline, my ability as a politician to be seen as doing something great, or about the grandeur of the office. It was really about trying to get things done.

It was fitting that when he retired from politics in 1981, then-Premier Bill Davis and then-Minister of Natural Resources Alan Pope named a park after him: René Brunelle park in Moonbeam. I think that was very fitting because, as the Minister of Natural Resources and as the advocate of people of Cochrane North and north-eastern and northern Ontario, he was one of those people who was instrumental in the Ministry of Natural Resources to understand that we need to make sure that there are parts of this province that are untouched, that are not developed, that are there and are protected for the generations to come. When he, as a young man and as a father—and eventually his grandchildren and their grandchildren, who are about to happen; congratulations, by the way—that in fact we're able to preserve parts of this province so that people can see what the natural environment is all about.

It was unfortunate last year that we were going to see a closure of that park. I know René would have been front and centre in the fight on that, but we had other people who rose to the occasion and understood that we needed to not only save René Brunelle park because it was his namesake but also because it was something that had to be saved. And as a result of people like Al Spack in Kapuskasing, who is a good friend, as a result of Tom Laughren, as a result of many citizens—Gilbert Peters in Moonbeam and everybody else—we all banded together and we did what? We did what René taught us to do, and that is to work together and to say, "There has to be a way forward. Let's accept that the government has a problem here. The problem is, there's not as much money in the treasury as there used to be because the pressure for that money is much harder today than it was in the

past. So let's accept that they've got a problem and let's all work together in understanding that problem and trying to find a solution."

In René's spirit—and it's kind of funny when you really think about it. In his spirit, the community did what René was doing very naturally all of his life and that is, trying to find ways to bring people together so that we can find solutions to our problems.

I have to say, I truly am saddened that he passed away some time ago. As we know, this tribute is much after the fact, but I'm really heartened in knowing that our region and this province is a better place today because René served in this place and he was able to bring something to this job that a lot of us could take example from, and most of all leaves a family that is so, so proud of what René did for his time here and can look at the future knowing that Ontario is really a better place because their father, their husband, their grandfather or their great-grandfather made it a better place to live.

Ensemble, on dit à la famille de M. Brunelle, merci de nous avoir prêté votre grand-père, votre père et votre arrière-grand-père. Ce sont seulement des mémoires chaleureuses qu'on a de lui. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Timmins—James Bay for his eloquent words.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: C'est un honneur de prendre la parole aujourd'hui au nom de mon parti et de notre chef, la première ministre Kathleen Wynne, pour rendre hommage à René Brunelle.

M. Brunelle a été mon prédécesseur de deux façons. Il a été ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires de 1972 à 1975, un poste que j'ai eu l'honneur d'occuper de 2006 à 2011.

M. Brunelle était un fier Franco-Ontarien ici à Queen's Park, et dans mon rôle de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, je célèbre aussi notre grande culture dans notre Assemblée législative et dans toutes les régions de l'Ontario.

J'aimerais ici rappeler la carrière de M. Brunelle, une carrière qui a débuté en 1958 comme député de Cochrane-Nord. Pendant 23 ans, il a servi les citoyens de sa communauté et de la province avec diligence et loyauté.

Chacun d'entre nous a le privilège de siéger dans cette Chambre; nous connaissons les multiples défis que présente ce travail et nous savons tous que nous ne pouvons pas garder ce poste sans avoir la confiance des gens dans notre communauté. Que M. Brunelle ait pu conserver son siège pendant 23 ans témoigne de son travail acharné et de la confiance que les électeurs de Cochrane-Nord avaient en lui.

Mr. Brunelle also had the trust of his party and his leader. He was the Minister of Lands and Forests, Minister of Social and Family Services, Minister of Community and Social Services and minister without portfolio. He was so well liked that a provincial park was named in his honour two years after he retired. When then-Premier

Bill Davis announced that the park would be named after Monsieur Brunelle, Premier Davis said, "René Brunelle is a man who has shown tremendous devotion to the north, his riding and its people. I can think of no one more deserving of this honour."

Monsieur Brunelle was a remarkable man. He lived for 90 years, and he filled those years with public service. He served overseas in France and Belgium with the Canadian army during World War II. After the war, he served the public in a different way, as a tourist operator. It was 13 years after the end of World War II when Monsieur Brunelle joined the Ontario Legislature, sitting in the chamber from 1958 to 1981.

He was also a family man, married to Andrée, father to Louis, Suzanne, Kelly and Pierre, and grandfather to Chloé, Tessa and Christopher.

I also learned that he graduated from l'Université d'Ottawa Normal School in 1941. As the representative from the riding where l'Université d'Ottawa is, I feel a connection with Monsieur Brunelle and with his family. He also did a year at Khaki University in London, England, and graduated from institutional management at the University of Toronto in 1948. He was a very well-educated man.

I met his daughter Suzanne, who is here with us today. Thank you for being here.

I want to say to them that their father and grandfather deserves their pride and their admiration. We are grateful that you shared him with us. He dedicated his life to public service, and 23 of those years he dedicated to the Ontario government serving the province, the people of Cochrane North and Franco-Ontarians. We have a better province and a better country because of him.

Monsieur Brunelle passed away in Magog, Quebec, with his wife—because his wife, Andrée, was from Magog, Quebec.

Thank you very much for sharing your father and your grandfather with us. We will remember him because he was here for all these years and because of this event today. Thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes? The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm honoured to represent the PC Party today and have the opportunity to pay tribute to René Brunelle, a former MPP, veteran and a proud northerner. It's my pleasure to welcome members of René's family here to Queen's Park: René's daughter Suzanne Drover and granddaughter Tessa Brunelle, who are here in the members' west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

René had a colourful background, and his story is an exciting one. It goes without saying that he had a great deal of experience before he chose to enter politics.

Born in 1920 in Penetanguishene but spending much of his life in Moonbeam, Ontario, René pursued his education at the University of Ottawa before returning to Ansonville, which is now part of Iroquois Falls, where he worked as a teacher.

René volunteered for service with the Canadian military in 1942 and was a Canadian officer on loan to

the British army; he was a second lieutenant. I'm very pleased that we got unanimous consent to wear poppies today, and to thank him for his time serving his country. He was wounded by shrapnel while in the infantry and he finished off his wartime service as a supply officer in Belgium and France until the end of the war. He left the military in 1946.

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Upon returning to northern Ontario, René bought a property on Remi Lake, near Kapuskasing, and went into the resort business. He had a vision for the business that would be known as Chalet Brunelle. He built cottages and a motel unit, and continually improved it to attract American clientele. This would be René's primary focus before making the call to enter politics in a by-election held in the spring of 1958.

But just before that important decision, he made probably a more important decision. He was in Toronto when he met the love of his life, Andrée, at a French social club and brought her home to Moonbeam where they worked in the resort business together and raised their family. They were married in 1956, so René was 36 years old at that time.

I must say, I see an awful lot of similarities, both for the kids growing up in this resort and for René; many similarities in that René married and he raised four kids—two boys, two girls—which is exactly what I did; he ran in a by-election, which is what I did; and I was in the resort business prior to getting in here. Also, of course, René was serving at the same time as my father, Frank Miller, in the Davis cabinet, so I have similar memories to Suzanne and her siblings about what it was like growing up in the days prior to a constituency office.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You could tell stories about that.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes.

During his long career as a parliamentarian, René had an impressive list of accomplishments. Serving on countless committees and working hard for his constituents, René was asked to join cabinet in 1966 by then-Premier John Robarts to serve as Minister of Lands and Forests. He would go on to serve in the cabinet of Premier Bill Davis as Minister of Mines, Minister of Community and Social Services, and finally as provincial secretary for resource development. René was also appointed commissioner of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission in June 1962.

As I mentioned, he served with my father, Frank; they overlapped from 1971 to 1981. In fact, I note from looking at press clippings that my father attended René's nomination meeting which was held in Hearst in 1975. This is one of many nomination meetings. Looking at the local newspaper, the Northern Times, they note: "Frank Miller, Minister of Health, was also on hand for the nomination and spoke highly of his cabinet partner...."

"Do you know that in the last two provincial elections this riding of Cochrane North, one of 15 in northern Ontario, gave the highest percentage of Conservative votes in the north? In 1971 Cochrane North led all northern ridings with 64% of the votes." Well, all I can say is we're a little envious of that now, on this side.

This obviously shows that René had tremendous respect, because this was after he'd served for a number of years, from the people he represented, and it was a pretty clear choice that he was their member.

I recently spoke with Claude Bennett, who served in the Davis cabinet with René. Claude was enthusiastic when he talked about René. He said many times what a great guy he was, but he described René as being reasonable, down-to-earth, sincere about the way he handled things and, as I say, generally a great fellow, was his language. Claude said that René particularly excelled as Minister of Community and Social Services. He knew his responsibilities and he was committed to getting the job done. He said that the world could be coming apart, but even in tense situations René's even temper, balance, his "way about him" would calm the situation down and get people to be realistic. Claude talked about going into meetings where they were quite anxious at the beginning of the meeting and René had this way about him of calming things down. He said he was genuine and believable.

I note he was also a pioneer. When I looked through various clippings, he came up in June 1972, with the *Globe and Mail* reporting that he had a \$3,000 income target supplement for the working poor that was a first of its kind. So it's obvious that the Ministry of Community and Social Services was very close and near and dear to his heart.

I had the pleasure of speaking with his son Pierre, to learn more about René, and as a side note, Pierre actually served as a page here at Queen's Park in 1972-73—he was a little unsure as to which year it was, but around 1972 or 1973.

He and others described how René would take the Ontario Northland train home on Friday nights—the overnight train—and I guess it went right to Moonbeam. Then, when he arrived in Moonbeam, he'd either be met by constituents at the train station or they would follow him home. He would spend most of Saturday holding constituency meetings at his home in Moonbeam. Then, on Sunday, he'd go to church and then have more meetings and then board the train to make the trip back. Obviously the family was giving up a lot because their dad would be so busy doing his job so well.

Pierre talked about how, to this day, he keeps bumping into people who want to give him memorabilia from his dad's time in office. In fact he said that just last week somebody dropped off a couple of cases of beer mugs with René's picture on them—probably from one election. That must have been an earlier election; I don't think we do too many beer mugs anymore.

René was famous for taking notes on envelopes. I can see him meeting people on the street. They'd have an issue, so then it would be, "Okay, where am I going to take this note?" He was also, as has been mentioned by other speakers, very approachable: at ease and not pompous. I think anyone felt they could just approach him.

There are many stories of René helping his constituents. For example, there was a welder who lived in

Hearst, which I believe is about 120 kilometres away from Moonbeam, and he was having WSIB problems. The welder hitchhiked to Moonbeam for a constituency meeting with René. René helped him with his problem and then he personally drove him back to the bus station and paid for his fare to get home. When René was a cabinet minister—back in those days, you had a dedicated car and driver—he would use his car and driver to help take constituents to medical appointments.

René chose to leave politics in 1981 after 23 years of service. He made a graceful exit, declining to contest the PC nomination for the spring election. Following his retirement from politics, René returned to northern Ontario.

As has been mentioned, a provincial park near Kapuskasing was renamed in his honour shortly after his leaving public life. It was dedicated in 1983. I certainly feel that this is an important gesture that highlights René's lifetime commitment to the north and lifetime passion for the outdoors. In the local newspaper—when that was going on, of course, Premier William Davis made the announcement. "René Brunelle is a man who has shown tremendous devotion to the north, this riding and its people," the Premier said. 'I can think of no one more deserving of this honour.'"

Alan Pope, who was the Minister of Natural Resources at the time, said, "I must say that it is a difficult task to walk in the footsteps of someone who has earned such respect in the north over so many years. I'm proud that my ministry can take part in honouring René Brunelle."

I'd like to thank the family members for loaning us your husband, your dad and your granddad for his many years of service to Queen's Park. He absolutely made a difference in this province and was a member, I think, that we can all look up to and try to emulate as someone who truly served the people he represented. He really made a difference. I know that his wife and the love of his life, Andrée, was not able to join us today—she's in Magog, Quebec—but to his wife, Andrée; to his kids, Louis, Suzanne, Kelly and Pierre; and grandkids, Chloé, Tessa and Christopher, we thank you for René. We just want to say what a great job he did around here at Queen's Park and what a difference he made in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all members for their tribute—very moving and heartwarming. I'd also echo the thank you to the family members for the gift of René. To them, we will provide you with a CD of today's tributes, along with copies of Hansard so that the family members can have them for their keepsakes.

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Mr. Norm Miller: I should just mention that anyone who wishes to meet the family: There's tea and coffee in the PC caucus room—room 348, I believe it is—and all members are welcome if they'd like to come.

Mr. Bill Walker: Room 351.

Mr. Norm Miller: Room 351. You'd think I'd know what room number it is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for that clarification. All members are invited to PC caucus room 351 for tea with the family members, should they wish to talk to them.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Pursuant to the order of the House of Wednesday, February 20, 2013, I beg leave to present an interim report on the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege with respect to the production of documents and review of the matters relating to the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Qaadri presents the committee's report.

Report presented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I would simply like to acknowledge the work of all members of this chamber to bring more transparency, accountability and light on this very important matter as we build and go forward with the energy infrastructure of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins-James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to be clear: This is an interim report that has come back to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The clarification is correct. It is an interim report.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this week is Emergency Medical Services Week in Canada, a time when we have the opportunity to recognize and thank our dedicated paramedics and dispatch personnel across this province.

This year's theme is Health Care in Motion, and I think that is certainly a fitting description of our passionate EMS professionals in Ontario. No matter the setting in which they work—be it rural or urban, land or air—emergency medical professionals across the province stand ready to respond to emergencies every single day.

To all of Ontario's dedicated emergency medical personnel, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your enormous contributions to this province's health care system. Ontarians count on you to be there in our time of greatest need, and we're very grateful for your dedication to those whom you serve.

A paramedic's work isn't just important; often, it's a matter of life and death. Whether it's responding to a horrific car crash or attending at the scene of a crime, paramedics are required to maintain their composure under significant pressure. Knowing at times that lives hang in the balance, they remain professional and focused on the well-being of those they serve.

Paramedics are increasingly playing an important role in prevention and wellness. Speaker, you know that an important focus of my ministry's Action Plan for Health Care is keeping Ontario healthy by promoting healthy habits and behaviours and better management of chronic diseases. Through their first-hand interactions with Ontario patients, paramedics do a great deal to educate and inform patients about how to take critical preventive measures and avoid future complications.

While some health care professionals care for their patients in an office or a hospital setting, paramedics often assess patients in their own homes. This means that paramedics could determine how living arrangements potentially affect patients' overall wellness and how their arrangements may affect their eventual plan of care. Speaker, as you know, my ministry's transformation agenda is driven by the goal to provide better care to more people in the most appropriate setting at the best cost, and there's an exciting new opportunity to deliver better individualized care through community paramedicine. The goal of community paramedicine is to support the highest users of emergency medical services—often seniors—by helping them manage their chronic conditions, attending to their unaddressed health care needs and helping them connect to other services as necessary. For example, paramedics may proactively check in on those high users. This helps patients to avoid future emergency department visits, hospitalizations or admission to long-term-care homes.

I'm pleased to share that paramedics in some communities are already involved in community paramedicine programs. For example, here in Toronto, the Community Referrals by EMS program enables paramedics to connect patients with appropriate services and in-home supports by making referrals to the CCAC.

Community paramedicine is a great example of the type of preventive approach that will help us to improve health care in Ontario, but also to improve our collective wellness, because taking preventive measures now will lead to better health outcomes in the future.

I know that community paramedicine is something that paramedics across the province are excited about.

Today also gives me an opportunity to reflect on some of the work our government has done to improve emergency medical services across Ontario. The province now shares land ambulance costs on a 50-50 basis with municipalities. We're also committed to fully funding costs for ambulance services to all First Nations communities in Ontario.

We now provide 100% funding for nurses dedicated to providing care to patients arriving by ambulance to hospital emergency departments. These nurses help paramedics off-load their patients more quickly, so that

paramedics can get back on the road to respond to more emergency calls.

Over the past year, we've put our critical land and air ambulance service, Ornge, on the right track, strengthening it to provide the best possible services to the people of Ontario. Although it's been a difficult time, I'd like to say a special thank you to the hard-working front-line professionals at Ornge, who never lost sight of their number one goal: to provide the highest quality care to Ontario patients.

As we transform health care in Ontario and maintain our focus on prevention and wellness, I know that paramedics will continue to play an important role in improving health outcomes for more Ontarians.

Once again, I'd like to reiterate my heartfelt thanks to all EMS workers right across Ontario who work day in and day out to make sure that patients in our province receive the highest quality emergency services, and that they are connected with the supports they need. Thank you for your passion and dedication to make Ontario the healthiest place to grow up and grow old.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries.

It's time for responses.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise today and recognize Emergency Medical Services Week, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and my PC caucus colleagues.

Every day, Ontario's 7,000 paramedics respond to emergency calls in each of our communities. It is because of the dedication and heroic actions of our local paramedics that thousands of citizens receive emergency medical treatment each and every year.

In addition to the life-saving skills paramedics are delivering, there is a growing number of jurisdictions involving paramedics in tactical teams, special rescue teams and disaster preparedness teams. Paramedics are equally involved in our remote and after-hours health centres, industrial sites and air medical teams. Paramedics can also be found in the field of injury prevention. Paramedics have a unique ability to share their experiences through their first aid and CPR classes, ACLS—advanced cardiac life support—PALS—pediatric advanced life support—and other training programs.

Paramedics in some jurisdictions are involved in other injury prevention programs such as car seat safety, fall prevention, public access to defibrillation programs and more. Such program partnerships show the leadership of paramedics but, more important, the care paramedics bring to our communities.

This year, the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada chose the theme Health Care in Motion. This couldn't be more fitting, as our paramedics are our first responders and provide critical medical services on the go. In light of this year's theme, paramedics are fostering new partnerships between first responders, emergency service groups and telecommunications experts to build on emergency health service delivery.

I hope all of my colleagues will take time to learn more about their local EMS and the important work they're engaging in. More importantly, please say thank

you for their day-to-day efforts and dedication, and also to their spouses and families.

I want to extend a special thank you to the dedicated EMS staff who keep the communities within Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound healthy and safe. Thank you for your continued dedication, and happy EMS Week.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party to acknowledge EMS Week. It's a national day of acknowledgement to pay tribute to our men and women who serve us in our emergency medical services field. What would we do without them, such a vital part of our overall health care system? So, obviously, it is an opportunity for us in this chamber to give our thanks and to give our acknowledgement of the vital work they do keeping us safe and keeping us healthy, and ensuring that they are there when we need them.

In Ontario, each municipality is required to maintain ambulance services that remain accessible, integrated, seamless, accountable and responsive. That provision of land ambulance services is a joint municipal-provincial responsibility, and currently 72 certified land ambulance services respond to over one million calls annually in this province. What a remarkable level of service. Those who are in emergent need, dire need of first responders to get to the scene of a tragedy, sometimes horrific scenes that we in this House couldn't imagine—we ask those men and women to see things we certainly wouldn't want to.

All the more reason that we should ensure, when it comes to providing the resources they need to do their job, and also compensating them—our emergency services are governed under special legislation that makes them an essential service, meaning we couldn't do anything without them in this province. We could not operate in a civil and cohesive way.

Through our labour negotiations, they are not given the same rights as other workers have. They have to go to binding interest arbitration when it comes to their collective agreements. It's a process that works. It's a process that's fair. It's a process that acknowledges that they are obviously essential, something we could not do without; all the more reason we need to acknowledge that vital component of their work and protect it, so that we obviously don't ever risk losing such an integral component of our overall safety in this province.

There isn't a day in this province when someone doesn't go without needing essential emergency services. Thankfully, they are there. They are responsive, they are professionals, they're trained, and they take pride in their work. Obviously, today is a day when we should take pride in them and commit ourselves—commit this body—to the resources they need and that our communities need to ensure that that service goes seamlessly throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise on this occasion to pay tribute to the men and women who provide that essential service and, obviously, to thank them every day for their professionalism and their level of commitment, and for keeping our communities safe.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage; and

"Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

"Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

"Whereas thousands of servers across the province have asked for this practice to stop;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the swift passage of Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of 'tip-outs' to management and owners."

It is signed by many people of the Windsor area. I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto and send it with page Alex.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I have the pleasure to present these petitions on behalf of the Port Perry Villa, West Shore Village and Community Nursing Home Port Perry, where I was last week. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health"—and she's here—"is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

"Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site ... physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

"Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

"Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government;"—shameful—"and

"Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and fall risks;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows"—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Just a moment, please.

"To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes,

our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP ... providers.”

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my constituents in the riding of Durham, in the plight of the Ministry of Health.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was quite proud to receive these hundreds of petitions from people on Manitoulin Island, particularly in Gore Bay over at the Manitoulin Lodge, who have a grave concern and have voiced it through signing these petitions.

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 people in Ontario waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care—e.g. to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

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“Whereas the personal support worker program has no provincial governing body that would provide provincial standards and regulation to ensure the best care for residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and insufficient;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will provide registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers in the province.”

I fully support this petition and sign it on behalf of the residents of Algoma-Manitoulin.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas beginning April 26, 2013, the new five-year commercial fishing agreement that the Saugeen Ojibway Nation and Ontario government have signed allowing commercial fishing to resume in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay year-round over the term of the agreement; and

“Whereas the terms and conditions of the agreement were drafted and signed without full and proper consultations with all affected community groups, such as local sportsmen's clubs who have and continue to do a tremendous amount of work in regard to stocking bays with fish to support the sports fishery; and

“Whereas the aforementioned groups were promised by the former MNR Minister Donna Cansfield that full and proper consultation would take place before any agreement would be signed; and

“Whereas the agreement provides no guarantees native fishermen won't set their gill nets deep inside nor within a one-kilometre radius of the mouths of Gleason Brook, as well as the Bothwell, Waterton and Keefer Creeks to protect spawning salmon and rainbow trout; and

“Whereas the use of gill nets poses a safety risk to recreational angling and pleasure boating, and expansion of netting further into the bays threatens to destabilize fish stock and thus local sport fishing, tourism and the economy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To repeal the agreement created between the Saugeen Ojibway Nation and Ontario government, effective immediately, and renegotiate a new agreement in consultation with all key stakeholders, including the sports fishing community.”

I support this petition, will sign my name and send it with page Simon.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, another petition from the members of Algoma-Manitoulin, particularly across northern Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I fully support this petition and sign it on behalf of residents of Algoma-Manitoulin.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning major changes to the provision of OHIP physiotherapy services as of August 1; and

"Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

"Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year; and

"Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

"Whereas under the changes scheduled for August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

"Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the delisting of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not proceed and that the provincial government guarantee that there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and passing it off to page Michael.

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: We have a petition here. It's titled "Reject subway taxes."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's Metrolinx transit report calls for a one-percentage-point increase to the harmonized sales tax, and a five-cents-per-litre regional fuel and gasoline tax, to fund transit expansion in the greater Toronto area; and

"Whereas most residents in rural, northern and eastern areas of the province from Cultus to Cornwall, Kenora to Cayuga, will neither see any benefits nor make use of this GTA-centric transportation network;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to reject the inappropriate and unfair tax proposals from the Ontario government's Metrolinx report."

I fully agree and affix my signature to this petition.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on cutting physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes—from an estimated \$110 million to \$58.5 million; and

"Whereas with this change seniors will not receive the care they are currently entitled to through their current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who the government plans to delist from OHIP on August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas the government has announced that the funding level, the number of treatments a residents could receive, has not been specified and will be reduced from a maximum of 150 visits/year to some unknown level which means the hours of care and number of staff providing seniors with physiotherapy will also be significantly reduced as of August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas our current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and falls risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse this drastic cut of OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors, our most vulnerable population, and to continue with \$110 million physiotherapy funding for seniors in long-term-care homes."

"I agree with the petition, will sign it and send it to the table with Simon.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas current community care access centre personal support worker guidelines do not provide a clear indication of whether PSWs are allowed to support patients' activities outside the home; and

"Whereas patient health is best ensured through an active, healthy lifestyle that may involve activities outside the patient's home; and

"Whereas the spirit of community care includes patient access to their community's healthy lifestyle resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact all necessary statutes that would allow personal support workers and other community care access centre staff to support their patients and clients both in the home and in necessary activities in their communities."

I agree with the petition and will be signing it and passing it off to page Michael.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time we have this afternoon for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2013 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2013, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated the budget motion, the leader of the third party had the floor. I'm pleased to recognize again the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate taking the opportunity to continue my debate on the budget motion.

I want to start by recalling the last election campaign. In the last election campaign, in 2011, I made it really clear during that campaign that I was seeking the job of Premier of the province of Ontario. But I also know that the result of that election campaign brought us a minority Parliament. The people of the province actually chose a minority government, and they gave that minority government, in my opinion, a particular mandate. And they gave me and my fantastic team of New Democrats, whom I have the honour to serve with here in this House day in and day out, a very important job to do: to deliver results for them.

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I'm proud to say that we've been able to deliver. Last year, we delivered support for working parents who were scrambling to find daycare. Last year, we delivered protection for families who were worried about cuts to their local hospitals. And we delivered a fiscal plan that balanced the books faster and made the budget a little more fair.

That was last year's budget. It wasn't easy; it took a lot of work. This year it took even more. We put forward some simple ideas that would make a difference in people's lives; ideas that would tackle their concerns about creating jobs and growing our economy while helping them in their everyday lives and balancing the books in balanced way. We've worked hard to put the issues that matter to people on the agenda. We worked even harder to deliver results.

People told us that they were worried about a lack of good jobs in this province, particularly for youth. The unemployment rate for young people just starting out is now upwards of 16%, and that number keeps climbing. For years now, Liberal and Conservative governments have insisted that corporate tax giveaways and schemes like the HST were going to create jobs. Well, Speaker, that hasn't worked.

People told us they wanted change. They want to see young people starting their careers and finding good jobs, not languishing in their parents' basements wondering if they're ever going to find work. So we put forward our First Start plan, a modest incentive to encourage companies that were ready to put young people to work.

That's change that will make a real difference for people in this province.

People told us they were worried about home care for their aging parents and loved ones. Some seniors are waiting as long as 262 days to get the home care they need, Speaker, and that's after they've been approved for it. We proposed a modest investment to ensure that anyone approved for home care would get a guarantee that they'd receive that home care within five days of being approved.

We also proposed a cap on CEOs' earnings in hospitals, so that the trend of salaries at the very top echelons of the health care system, pushing seven figures, was stopped in its tracks. The Liberals continue to refuse to cap CEO salaries, but New Democrats have ensured that wait times for home care will go down. For seniors and others waiting for home care, that's change that will make a real difference in their lives.

People told us they felt that they could barely keep up with the growing costs of everyday life, whether it's ever-climbing electricity bills or the growing number of regressive fees and taxes that are unfair—it looks like there's more to come, in that regard, if the Liberals have their way, Speaker. But people have been telling us that they are feeling that life is growing more and more unaffordable.

Despite reforms that took place in this province a couple of years ago that dramatically reduced benefits and dramatically increased profits for the insurance industry, Ontario drivers continue to pay the highest auto insurance rates in our country. To make matters worse, drivers in some lower-income neighbourhoods will pay literally twice what drivers in some of the richest neighbourhoods in Toronto are being asked to pay. Now, a system that asks the people in Rexdale to pay so that the people in Rosedale get a break is a broken system. We worked hard for change. We won a reduction of auto insurance rates of 15% over the next year, to put money back in people's pockets and fairness into a system that's been unfair for far too long. That's change that will make a real difference in people's lives.

People told us that they wanted the budget to be balanced and they wanted the budget to be fair. They're tired of seeing their money spent without any guidelines, without any outcomes, without any clear results. We proposed eliminating some tax measures that weren't clearly linked to creating jobs or increasing Ontario's productivity, so that we could focus on ones that were directly tied to those kinds of things. We proposed cost-saving measures like bulk purchasing to achieve efficiencies. Our budget proposals were designed to make life better for the people who make our province work, but they also aimed to rebuild the trust of the public.

We heard from Ontarians very loudly and clearly that they want to see better. They don't believe that Liberals have learned their lesson after their government's billion-dollar eHealth scandal, the \$700-million scandal at Ornge, or the half-a-billion-dollar gas plant scandal. They know that a Conservative government wouldn't be any different. In fact, all that they need to do is look at what's

happening in Ottawa to see that that bunch are really every bit just as bad.

People know that things can be different. They need to know that things can be different, that the government will invest public money wisely and well. They need to know that, in tough economic times, every single dollar is being put to use in the public's interest—not in the interests of the governing political party, but in the interests of the public.

New Democrats have some lessons to teach, actually. We have some lessons to teach the other parties about balancing the books and keeping a careful eye on the public purse. In fact, many people don't know this, but New Democrat governments across this country have a better track record than Liberal governments and have a better track record than Conservative governments when it comes to balancing the books. We've run fewer deficit budgets than the other parties, and when we have run deficit budgets, they have been lower in relationship, in ratio, to the GDP than the other parties' in those provinces.

We do have some lessons that we can teach when it comes to being prudent and balanced and wise and still achieving great things for the provinces where we've governed. We achieved this success by taking a balanced approach, by looking carefully at our respective provinces' revenues and expenditures and by ensuring that government is accountable and transparent.

That is why we propose a financial accountability office, modelled after the parliamentary budget office in Ottawa—the one that Stephen Harper hated so much that he tried to shut it down recently. That office will give people a chance to get independent verification about government spending claims, free from partisan spin, free from Enron accounting tricks. That's the kind of change that will make a real difference for Ontarians.

The results that we've delivered over the past 18 months show that New Democrats have our priorities straight. It's about people, Speaker; that's what it's about. That's what they put us here to do: to make life better for them, to keep them in the focus and to make sure that all of the work that we do around here is about making their lives better.

We didn't get everything we wanted in this budget process. We didn't get everything that the people needed in this budget process. But we got concrete results that put job creation ahead of corporate tax giveaways, that put the needs of patients ahead of the needs of hospital CEOs and that gave a break to families struggling to pay the bills instead of the company that's putting the bill in the mail.

I'm proud of what we've been able to achieve, but it hasn't been easy. We know what to expect from this Liberal government. We know that we are ready to work hard for the people. But we know that the Liberals, unfortunately, are always ready to work hard, but only for the power of the Liberal Party and for the good of the Liberal Party.

We saw it in the fall, when the Liberals moved heaven and earth to engineer a by-election and created a crisis in

our schools in a short-sighted attempt to win back their majority power. They lost, and of course, as a result, we were able to elect a fantastic MPP, Catherine Fife, for Kitchener–Waterloo.

We saw it when, after that by-election and the people of Kitchener–Waterloo made it clear that they, like the rest of Ontarians, were not going to hand the Liberals majority power, the Premier decided to shut the legislative chamber down and effectively throw out thousands—well, probably not thousands, but certainly hundreds—of hours of legislative work and many, many bills, into the garbage, for their own selfish political purposes. Time and again, we've seen the Liberal Party that doesn't understand that there's a difference between serving the public and being self-serving when it comes to helping their own party.

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So, Speaker, we're going to do what we told the people back in October 2011 that we were going to do. We're going to work hard, and we're going to keep working hard. We're going to keep working hard to improve health care. We're going to keep working hard to create jobs. We're going to keep working hard to make life affordable, and we're going to keep working hard to make government accountable and to deliver for the people who elected us to be here.

Speaker, I can tell you, the other opposition party on both counts, last budget and this budget, decided to sit on the sidelines. They don't think it's important to work hard to get results for people. They don't think that's what they were elected to do. New Democrats disagree seriously. We would rather roll up our sleeves and do the hard work that needs to be done to make a real difference for people, even if it means you have to take a little bit of criticism—because you know what? We know at the end of the day that we can stand proudly on our track record of improved health care, of jobs for young people, of lower auto insurance rates.

For us, that's the goal, to make life better for people. Unfortunately, for others, the goal is something else, but the people of Ontario can sleep well, knowing that there's one political party in opposition that's prepared to roll up its sleeves, put its nose to the grindstone and try to achieve things on their behalf, because that's exactly what they elected all of us to do in October 2011, and we are proud to be able to deliver on their behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have the unusual opportunity of speaking for some 20 minutes. It doesn't happen very often in the House, but we are talking about the proposed budget document. I'm delighted to add to what's already been said by members of both sides of the House, and I'm very pleased to follow the leader of the third party, who has mentioned some of the benefits, the positive aspects that are included in the budget.

The budget is a document that received extensive consultation prior to being introduced in the House. It is not something that just came out of the blue. The Minis-

ter of Finance has consulted individual taxpayers, stakeholders, corporations, bankers and financial institutions, and they all have made contributions, as well as the members of the opposition and the leader of the third party. Through the encouragement and the persistence and the various conversations that our leader has had with both leaders, I have to say, of the two oppositions, we were able to proceed with the budget and we are here today, having seen some of the changes that have been incorporated, as suggested by the leader of the third party.

I think they are beneficial to our people, our consumers. They are ones that we can support because we believe they are an improvement to the budget, and this is part of the work that we do here. Let me say, Speaker, that we are blessed to live in a country where we can speak freely of what we see would be the best way of serving the people who have sent us to serve them in this House. It is one of those very rare things that we enjoy, being free to speak, and it is because of the freedoms that we enjoy and the contributions we make that we can do things better, and in the end we can bring legislation that will benefit in a positive way the people of Ontario. So we welcome all of that.

Other members have chosen not to make any contribution whatsoever, and that's fine. I think this reflects also the liberty that our people at large have to see how things are done in the House and to act accordingly.

What are some of the things that we feel good about sending this budget forward? By sending it forward, I mean that I hope that we can see it going through, being approved, so we can indeed start to implement some of those positive measures that the budget talks about.

Let me give you some of the main points. I will try, if I have time, to dwell on some of the individual benefits. Of course, I think the Premier has mentioned this many, many times before. I have to say that Premier Wynne understood very well the mood of the people, the times that economically we are going through, the pressure that we are facing externally from other jurisdictions, and therefore she has made a tremendous contribution in making sure that indeed the budget that has been presented and we are debating today addresses exactly that.

Jobs and growth: I think jobs and prosperity go well together, because we can't have prosperity unless our people are working.

She mentioned many times to have a fair society, to be fair with our people, especially in social assistance reform. And something that our Premier and we feel very strong about is investing in everyday life; not only in our own individual life but in the individual life of our taxpayers, our people.

The deficit reduction to the public service reform—we are well under way meeting that. As a matter of fact, I think it includes some of the recommendations from the Drummond report. We are well under way: We have already met some of those recommendations. So we're doing fine. We are now at \$9.8 billion, which is the fourth year in a row that we are hitting the target, and we are on the way of beating already the 50-year target.

Again, Speaker, I could say, "Line our bases." Let me say that this is a fair and balanced-approach budget, as has been presented. It is determined and well disciplined. It's presenting very strong fundamentals. It beats all the financial targets, and we have our own way—our own path—to balance, to accomplish that. Mainly, it is the economic plan for the long term. I don't think we can look at the next year or the next two years. I think it's important that every government take a long look at what we want to see in the next five, 10, 15 and 25 years.

Some of the highlights: For example, we have the gasoline tax fund, which is creating \$321 million, which is dedicated to fund municipal transit structures throughout municipalities throughout Ontario. Also, we are giving choices for families in need of the Ontario Trillium Benefit. Now, as we have heard, we have listened and we have acted, it is in the budget, and people who are eligible to receive all these benefits and these refunds can choose now if they wish to receive them on a lump-sum basis, if you will, or if they want to receive them on a monthly basis. I'm talking about the Ontario Sales Tax Credit and the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit as well. They can have that on a monthly basis or on a lump-sum basis.

On jobs and growth, this is something that we have to pay real attention to. When we say "long-term care" and we have long-term views, we're looking at creating jobs not now but down the road as well. One of the things in this so-called smart investment includes some \$35 billion to modernize infrastructure and create some 100,000 jobs per year. On top of that, we have allocated another \$100 million for small and urban municipalities to create jobs in their own local-area projects.

1430

I heard very well the leader of the third party when, among other things, she said she was requesting of our Premier what she wanted to do: creating a job-training fund for young people. She wanted to see, I believe, some \$35 million for this job-creation project. I think this is something that was already working very well within the intent of the Premier while working on the budget delivery. We have multiplied this by eight times. Instead of \$30 million, the Premier decided that if we want to create a job strategy fund for youth on a long-term basis, we should have something like \$295 million to create some 30,000 jobs for youth. This, I think, would go a long way indeed in helping reduce the very high and frustrating number of unemployed youth in our province, so this will be well-received.

On the fair society aspect, we are allowing our people to keep more of their paycheques, especially those that are on social assistance. We are saying that the first couple of hundred dollars would be exempted. It's not huge, but it's something that has never been done, and again, it's to offer some assistance to our people on social assistance.

As well, we have increased funding for children in poverty through the Ontario Child Benefit, and it's in the budget. We have offered more support for people with

disabilities. We have put more money into programs. Again, it's because we understand that there is need, and that is one way to assist those.

Investing in everyday life: I mentioned that before, Speaker. One of the major components that I think is well supported by every member of the House—we had the big support of the third party, and their leader herself—was with respect to auto insurance: a reduction in rates of some 15%, on a gradual basis, if we may say that. We are going to reach this 15% on a gradual basis. This is good, Speaker. This is going to affect some nine million of our drivers and their families as well.

I will come back to that in a moment to explain and talk a bit more about auto insurance. But something that I'm also interested in myself, very deeply, when it comes to providing more care for our seniors, is that another 46,000 seniors will be receiving home care on, if you will, a target of five days, period.

Education, as well, has been one of our main fundamentals with respect to providing assistance to our people. Education and health care, I think, were our two main pillars. They continue to be two main pillars of the present Premier, Kathleen Wynne. We are pleased to see education for our kids and full-day kindergarten.

The 30% tuition grant continues. Even though we heard rumblings that we couldn't afford it, that we couldn't do it, that it's not the time to do it, we believe that those are two particular areas that we would do well to continue funding. The Premier understood that and wanted to make it a point that it indeed remains in the budget.

Debt reduction, I think I have mentioned: The reason we are able to accomplish that is that we have already paid over \$5 billion since we came into power. We are well on the way—I think it is important that we maintain bringing the deficit down so we are in line to eliminate it completely by 2017-18. We did that by controlling spending, and we also had to consider raising revenues.

We also brought in some tax reforms, which are now at work. We're stimulating the economy. If we cannot do that, we cannot create jobs. The people who are not working, money's not coming in—and therefore it's a must that we continue to do that, Speaker. We have indeed created 400,000 jobs since the recession, and we have 130,000 more jobs now than we had prior to the recession. Again, I have to commend that 60% of Drummond's recommendations with respect to the transformation of public service—we are on target and we are doing that.

Let me touch a bit on a longer basis, if you will, with the auto insurance, because it's been a very weak spot not only with me but I think with members of the House in general. It's an area that has been around for quite some time, and we wanted to do some real change. As a matter of fact, it started in 2010, when we introduced some legislation addressing this critical issue. It was the accountability, the transparency, the cost-saving, and we realized that something had to be done.

As a result of the reforms that we introduced in 2010, yes, the rates did come down somewhat, but not to the

level that was acceptable, because in my area I would get a lot of complaints, and I'm still getting complaints, Speaker, as to why: "I am a good driver. Why should I be penalized by the insurance companies because I happen to live in an M9L 1C4 zip code?" I think this is totally irrelevant. I believe that it's wrong. I believe that it discriminates against good drivers all over, whatever they may be, and I think its time has come, I have to say.

I'm pleased that we have support of the House. I hope we have the support of all the House, as this is an issue that affects drivers all over Ontario, not only within a particular ward or riding or jurisdiction, but it affects our people throughout Ontario. I hope that the budget comes to pass so we can work on the implementation of the reduction and the direction that will be legislated by this government, by this House to the regulatory authority.

Speaker, in 2010 we did introduce a reform, and what did our reform include? It included announcing also the reform to the insurance anti-fraud task force. This was in the 2011 budget. That was part of some 38 recommendations as well. In January 2013, we approved regulatory amendments to combat, indeed, fraud and protect consumers. We know that a big part of the premiums continuing to rise is because of the amount of fraud that goes on in the industry.

1440

Speaker, this is the important point: How is the government going to make sure that indeed this will take place? To achieve the premium reduction, the government will be introducing legislation, by amending. Of course, the budget has to be approved first, and then the amendment will proceed to:

- legislate a premium reduction of 15%, on average, within a period of time to be prescribed by regulation;

- require insurers to offer lower insurance premiums for consumers with safe driving records. Speaker, we want to commend the people who have safe driving records;

- give the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, in short, FSCO, the authority to license and oversee the business practices of health clinics and practitioners who employ auto insurers; and

- provide, as well, the Superintendent of Financial Services with the authority to require insurers to file for rates.

On top of that, the government will intensify its existing cost and rate reduction strategy by transforming the current auto insurance dispute resolution system by appointing an expert to review the system and propose legislative amendments by the fall of 2013; and base auto insurance benefits on medical evidence, including directing the regulator to provide an interim report this year on the progress of the minor injury treatment protocol project.

Speaker, my time is quickly coming to an end. I will have a lot more to say because the budget contains a lot of information that I think would be of benefit for our people to know.

I'm very confident that the budget will proceed, will pass. Once that happens, the beneficial proposals will

indeed come out and we can start to implement them. The people will see that and we can move on, especially with the infrastructure that creates thousands and thousands of jobs.

Speaker, 20 minutes was great, but not enough. I look for work to doing some more some other time, but for today, I say thank you so much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a privilege to get up to respond to the minister responsible for seniors.

Last week, constituency week, I had a chance to meet with a number of seniors in Chesterville in a new home, Garden Villa. They were very concerned about changes we see in this budget over physiotherapy, major cuts to a group where those services can mean so much, can mean their retaining mobility—really meaning the difference between enjoying life and not enjoying life. It's too bad that we see some of these cuts.

These are just some of the cuts we're seeing. Not too long ago I met with some doctors, and they were talking about the cuts to cataract surgery last year. You can imagine important thing such as being able to see. It's the government that put quotas on.

More disturbing to me, these are things that they haven't talked about. They turn around and they talk about how we have the best health care system in the world. They've been chiselling away at this and reducing services so that not only seniors, but many people can't get these services that make a huge difference in life.

It's funny now; after a report on auto insurance was out in 2011, they're talking about looking at it, talking about getting rid of some of the categories that the auto insurance companies actually use to set rates. If you want to do that, there is a report talking about many of the issues that affect auto insurance. You can't just legislate a reduction; we'll be back next year legislating free flows so that they can come back up to look after their losses.

It's a government that's got no plan. I think it's time to change this government. We just can't support it through this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the minister responsible for seniors. He always has eloquent delivery and he's always calm, cool and collected when he delivers.

I listened intently to what he was saying, and he certainly made some points. However, I want to make it perfectly clear from the NDP perspective that we will be diligently watching what's going to unfold in the next few months. If this government does not follow through on their promises—with all due respect, there have been some Liberal promises broken in the past; I ran out of ink on the amount. If they do not follow through on what they're saying in this Parliament and they do not follow through on all the main things that we've accomplished, they certainly aren't going to last too long.

We are serious about this. We want this to happen. We don't want just to talk about it. We don't want more

consulting. We don't want more committees set up. We want actual things done. That's why we stood firm. That's why we fought hard to get some of the things we got from this governing Liberal Party.

I'll tell you what I am proud of, Mr. Speaker: It's the fact that we did at least listen. We worked. We tried to get what was good for the people we represent, as much as we could possibly do. We hung on to the last, fought to the last minute to get things, improvements. I think there's some really good stuff if they follow through on what they said they're going to do.

Believe me, all of Ontario is watching. We are watching. I'm sure the official opposition is watching. I'll be honest, Speaker; I hate to say that it's the last kick at the cat. If you don't follow through on what you said you're going to do, you will not be governing in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler du budget qui a été présenté, et je dois dire que je dois féliciter le troisième parti pour avoir donné des idées au gouvernement sur comment on peut améliorer la situation en Ontario. La chef des néo-démocrates est venue avec des suggestions importantes, des suggestions qui font que la qualité de vie des Ontariens va être bien améliorée.

Le parti d'opposition a décidé, même avant que le budget ne soit écrit, de ne pas l'appuyer. Alors, c'est étrange—même avant qu'on ne l'ait écrit. Ils ne l'ont pas lu. Avant qu'il ne soit écrit, ils ont dit : « Nous autres, on ne l'appuie pas. »

Il y a deux raisons pour ça. Une des raisons est qu'ils veulent avoir une élection le plus rapidement possible. Pourquoi? On ne sait pas. Peut-être parce qu'ils veulent changer de chef, puis ils voulaient se servir de nous autres et de vous autres. Mais on n'est pas tombé dans la trappe. Alors on a décidé d'écrire un budget qui serait très sensible aux besoins des Ontariens, avec l'apport du gouvernement néo-démocrate, et je les remercie aujourd'hui.

Je suis heureuse de voir qu'on met l'accent sur l'emploi des jeunes. Il y a trop de jeunes qui sont sans emploi—moins que dans les pays d'Europe, par exemple. On a de la famille en Europe, et le taux de chômage est très élevé chez les jeunes de moins de 30 ans—ici, non. Il y a plus d'emplois, mais on veut prévenir ce qui arrive en Europe, alors on va mettre l'accent sur aider les employeurs.

Aussi, la fonction publique—on doit, nous, mettre l'accent sur ce qu'on peut faire pour augmenter l'emploi chez les jeunes. Puis je pourrais parler aussi du domaine de la santé et du domaine des services sociaux dont j'ai été la ministre pendant cinq ans et demi.

Je vais m'arrêter ici, mais je voulais aujourd'hui remercier les néo-démocrates pour les bonnes idées qu'ils ont amenées au budget. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to say a few words in response to the minister responsible for

seniors. He made a lot of points that were really interesting when it comes to the budget and its implementation. In his particular role, dealing with seniors, he's got a lot of issues that he must be listening to from the general public. There's no question that there are some issues out there that need to be addressed, and they were kind of hidden in the budget in what I thought was an irresponsible way.

Definitely, physiotherapy services are something I'm hearing a lot about. I had a demonstration in my office last Friday. People are quite upset. My understanding is there's about a \$44-million reduction in the amount of physiotherapy services that will go to seniors in Ontario.

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I'm glad the minister has at least brought Mr. Miller's bill back out on sprinkler systems for retirement homes. There's no question that that is something we have to be very concerned about, the safety of our seniors because, again, that falls under—whether you call it retirement homes, seniors' housing or whatever it may be, we have to do the very best we can. These are the kinds of issues that I guess the government is trying their best to address.

Finally, I think most seniors would be interested in the kind of debt we leave for their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. That is the key thing that I'm most concerned about, that we really zero in on this. We're going into debt about \$1.9 million an hour, and I think we have to do better in how we spend our money provincially.

It looks like this budget will pass, and we'll be looking very carefully at both the government and the members of the third party who will be supporting the budget apparently.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return to the minister responsible for seniors for his two-minute response.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm very grateful for the generous comments by colleagues the members from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Hamilton-Stoney Creek—Hamilton East-Stoney Creek; Paul, my friend, would never forgive me if I didn't remember his riding correctly—the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and of course the member from Simcoe North, who addressed very nicely the seniors' portion.

Let me say with respect to the physiotherapy services and seniors, that actually that is a change that is much welcomed, Speaker. I can see some 218,000 seniors receiving physiotherapy. The eligibility has not changed. The format has not changed. They will continue to receive these services in retirement homes, nursing homes, community care centres and even on a one-to-one basis, if necessary, in their own home. So I think we have to take a good look at the changes that are being made and how they will be implemented; we'll keep an eye on that as well.

But I want to touch briefly on my colleague the member from Simcoe North, and he's quite right. We have to address seniors' issues, in the form of care and

safety, protection and living in a place that offers peace of mind not only for seniors themselves but for family members.

Let me just briefly say that the Retirement Homes Act came into force two years ago. The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority came after that, and it's part and parcel of providing, indeed, the best safety for seniors living in retirement homes.

I thank all the members, and I thank you, Speaker, for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I would like to address Bill 65, the budget measures act, in the context of the great province that we've inherited from the World War II generation, the great generation. I know there was a veteran in the members' gallery—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd like to remind the House that we are debating the budget motion at present. So I'll return to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Further to this budget motion my question is, what have we inherited? We know what we inherited from that great generation, the World War II generation. There was a veteran in the members' gallery earlier today. I know John Fehr is sitting in the gallery right now. I hope he doesn't throw any tomatoes at me. I gave him about five tomatoes about an hour ago.

My concern is that we now see an Ontario that is in debt to the tune of \$281 billion. We know the projected debt for the fiscal year 2017-18 is \$411.4 billion. What right do we have as—and I myself, I'm in the baby boom generation. If our generation can't pay off this debt, how can we expect the next generation, our children and our grandchildren, to address this issue? I know my kids have had difficulty finding well-paying work. We had it pretty good, as the baby boom crowd; there always seemed to be work. The generation was always willing to work, certainly. We can't pay off this debt. What business have we got passing this on to the next generation coming along?

Again, \$281 billion in four years projected to be \$411.4 billion. Unfortunately, what we're debating this afternoon with respect to the budget continues a sad tale that I've certainly observed over the last 10 years, a tale of deficit spending and increased taxation. Stay tuned—we are now hearing there's more Liberal sales tax and gas tax hikes being proposed to fund subways. Again, we know this from a government-sponsored study that's been done.

You know, this tax-and-spend legacy of the past 10 years, it puts me in mind of a prediction that was made 10 years ago. It was a prediction made by Mark Mullins, the Fraser Institute's director of policy studies, a prediction that pointed to a costly future for the people of Ontario. This is what Mark Mullins had to say 10 years ago: "The government has been floating trial policy balloons for months.... We examined them all and priced their impact on the deficit...."

"The result is a stunning surprise: all of the proposed deficit reduction comes from new revenues ... and spending is actually set to rise." I'll continue with the quote: "This is basically pickpocket economics, a tax-and-spend approach that can only diminish Ontario's future prosperity." That's a prediction of 10 years ago.

Fast-forward to today, this year's budget: We look back on a decade that more than doubled the debt. At that time it was \$139 billion and, as I've recently indicated, it's presently sitting at \$281 billion. It's really no wonder—certainly down in my riding people for several years now have referred to Mr. McGuinty as "Dalton the Debt-Doubler." The numbers are here; the numbers don't lie.

It gets worse. As I mentioned, the government's appointed economist, Don Drummond, has brought in a prediction: Four years from now we will be staring down the barrel of a \$411.4-billion debt. In the past 10 years, they did call for action—they called for significant action—and yet instead of reducing government spending and reducing taxes, which would spur the economy and create some jobs, we saw a series of tax hikes. We saw spending hikes empty our wallets, essentially.

This 2013 budget continues the trend that's now calling for \$3.6 billion in new spending this year alone. So we've seen 10 years of taxing, 10 years of spending that have gone a long way to eliminate Ontario's competitive advantage and driven business, investment and jobs into neighbouring jurisdictions.

As we all know, Ontario's got something like 600,000 people out of work. Jobs are literally fleeing the province. Look at London: 9.9% unemployment. Caterpillar closed Electro-Motive and moved to Indiana. More recently, Caterpillar made an announcement they're moving a Toronto operation to the state of Michigan. And we're witnessing, down in my riding, our third Steelworker US Steel lockout in three years. Two lockouts now at Nanticoke's Lake Erie Works—a lockout that's been going for a number of weeks. Hopefully, it won't go for a number of months.

I had an opportunity to address a rally this weekend down at the plant gate at US Steel. I had an opportunity to explain what we've been talking about in the Legislature with respect to that particular lockout. I've raised it in question period. We had, as you would know, a late show debate. I asked the same questions that I asked during the previous lockout; I got the same answers. Nothing has really changed. We're dealing with, obviously, a global corporation, an international union that is able to match that corporation, and we have a province of Ontario that seems to be paralyzed by these kinds of things.

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Of course, there's a provincial mediator. Back and forth a bit, we've asked what is the broader role for this mediator? I was told by the ministry that that information cannot be divulged. Questions I asked of the labour minister here, Yasir Naqvi—I asked him to at minimum talk to the company, talk to the union, come down to the

area, try and pull sides together, talk to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—there's someone who has a career in the steel industry. There's a breadth of knowledge there. I've asked the minister to go down to Pittsburgh, go to Washington, perhaps go to Gary, Indiana; unfortunately that's where the steel will be coming from. US Steel will continue to market steel in Canada, but they are definitely not making it down at the Lake Erie Works right now.

Again, I guess my question is—we've gone through a number of lockouts now, and I'm just not sure what this ministry or what this government has learned about that. One thousand Steelworkers locked out directly impacts 4,000 jobs. Indirectly, that can impact up to 9,000 jobs. You go up and down the value chain. You go back to the iron ore industry, the scrap industry and the coal industry, for example. Going forward, the trucking industry, value-added, the engineering—all of these jobs are dramatically impacted, not to mention car dealerships or restaurants. You can imagine the dramatic impact it has on a rural riding that knows how to make steel. We know how to produce electricity. Regrettably, this government has shut down the gigantic OPG coal-fired station at Nanticoke. We have Imperial Oil, which is still cooking along. We know how to produce this product.

I see no action, no change in direction from this government to deal with some of these new realities of globalization and consolidation, in this case particularly with the steel industry. We see the same in the forest industry, obviously, and so much of our manufacturing.

A week ago, actually during constituency week, I attended our annual meeting of the United Way, with much discussion, of course, about the fact that there are 1,000 Steelworkers locked out. It can be measured, the impact that's going to have on contributions to the United Way, ever bearing in mind the generosity of Steelworkers for United Way and the agencies that are funded by it.

I've explained to the Steelworkers—for decades they've supported United Way. They're going to be in trouble now. We're going to see trouble with families, and oftentimes you see the marital, the legal and social problems. It's a two-way street, and I do ask those who are locked out to make use of those services that you've been funding for so many years. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone. I spent a number of years developing employee assistance programs. We would never go forward without labour and management at the table. It's something I feel this government could learn a bit about as well. US Steel, at that time Stelco, had an excellent program, probably one of the best programs that you would find in Ontario, and again I ask those families, I ask the leadership of Steelworkers 8782 to spread the word: Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and ask for help, because we're going through a very, very tough time down at the Lake Erie Works.

I certainly talked to an awful lot of people on the weekend. I was copied on a letter to the union leader, Bill Ferguson. I'll just quote it in part: "I attended the rally on Saturday with my husband who works at the Nanticoke

plant. I appreciated the support provided by other unions and the comments from politicians and union leaders. I may have missed it, but I did not hear any specific plans of action to end this dispute.

"It is obvious picketing will not do any harm to US Steel, as they have simply moved operations to the" United States. This we know.

In this email they go on to say, "This fight needs to go to Queen's Park and Ottawa," because we have a government that—unless it's right in somebody's backyard—are themselves more than willing to turn a blind eye.

Also during my time, just on Saturday, a very young family, a couple, approached me; they had a very small child with them. Of course, the young fellow has been locked out. He would be on strike pay, which isn't that significant, really. His wife let me know she had just been laid off by children's aid. This is something we're seeing across the province of Ontario: layoffs in children's aid, certainly in Hamilton. There would be other children's aids—I think Windsor—other situations where they're going through some tough times. These other children's aids haven't been in the media.

I had an opportunity to write a letter to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, just to first of all raise the issue in a more formal way. We all know how that works now: It opens the door for emails and telephone conversations. I've had an awful lot of conversations, again, with both management and the union—members of the board of our local Haldimand-Norfolk children's aid. And my question is, what are the reasons for these cuts in transfer payments? Has this particular government been transparent in explaining the new funding formula to the various children's aid societies across the province? Again, as with Steelworkers, is this government sitting down with the children's aid, sitting down with the associations, the unions that are connected?

We were told—and the minister would be aware—the historic concern over the funding system, a system that rewarded volume and volume increases over results, and that was making it more difficult for our children's aid societies to adapt. There was hope locally that the new funding formula would help remedy some of these shortcomings. However, unfortunately, locally we see a budget dropping from \$21.5 million down to \$17.8 million over the next five years. The layoffs are happening. I'm concerned about any threat to the core services, and I just challenge this government, how are you implementing this? What kind of advice are you giving to our children's aid societies? What happened to the proposal in this formula to bring stability to this sector? That's certainly not the reality down in Haldimand-Norfolk. What advice are they giving with respect to finding efficiencies, finding cost-effective measures? Where's the encouragement on that front?

Layoffs are—that's a bit of a blunt instrument. There are other options. We have certainly proposed a wage freeze, which is—I would say that for most a wage freeze is preferable to a layoff. I introduced a private member's bill a year ago, Speaker, recommending furlough, the concept of furlough, furlough Friday, something that's

done to a great extent in various states across the United States.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: What's the option? I didn't hear the interjection, but locally the option is cutting programs and laying off. I would vote for a wage freeze and I would vote for furlough.

Now, Speaker, I really am finding difficulty in any approaches from this government to get my steelworkers back to work, to get some steel produced again, or how better to deal with these layoffs at children's aid. One thing I do know: This government's hands have really become so tied over the past 10 years with the constant overspending, the wasteful spending of money—something we're going to be seeing again to the tune of something like \$3.6 billion in this present government.

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To date, it seems Premier Wynne has been more interested in spending more, not spending less, and yet insists the budget will be balanced—though mathematically, I feel that would be impossible, certainly at this rate of spending. Ontario—this government—has a serious fiscal problem. This government is not being honest about it. They certainly don't want to let us know what the plan is to balance the books. I don't see a plan at all. I see some numbers that don't add up—they do add up; they add up to more deficit. Of course, accumulated deficits translate into debt.

Government debt, like the debt being increased in this budget, as I said, is no more than accumulated deficits. This year's budget calls for a provincial deficit of \$11.7 billion. Many will recall the Don Drummond report—what's that, gosh, a number of months ago now? The Don Drummond report predicted that in four years this government's deficit will be \$30.2 billion. This year, it's \$11.7 billion. I see no evidence of this government changing its ways, and I do feel that it's very important to continue to analyze the Don Drummond projections. His projection is, for the fiscal year 2017-18, a \$30.2-billion deficit.

Even with the projected deficit this year of \$11.7 billion and no indication of where they'll find the savings to balance the books—the present government claims they'll balance the books in four years, but their own hand-picked economist, Don Drummond, puts the lie to that promise, again, with his projection of a \$30.2-billion deficit. Add that \$30.2-billion deficit, four years down the road—that is added to, as I recall, the \$411.4-billion deficit coming up in 2017.

That gets put on our children and that gets put on our grandchildren, crushing any dreams and any hopes that they may have of a half-decent job or a good job, any hope they may have of accessing world-class health care, and any hope they would have of living in an environment where business and entrepreneurs can thrive, let alone survive. In fact, our party leader aptly pointed out in his response to the budget that every child born today will have \$20,000 of provincial debt on their back. I find that unconscionable.

In 2001, Spain had a debt level of just over 25%. They did nothing. Today, Spain has a debt level of 56% of the gross domestic product. Not too long ago, Greece was just like Ontario, with a debt level of 40%—that's the debt level right now. That's what Greece had, not that long ago. Before long, it reached 100%. Today, it sits at a whopping 153%. Very clearly, if we continue down this path, that's where we are going to end up. We cannot continue to cruise along in a climate of comfortable complacency when we see the kind of deficit and debt levels that this government has presented to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I listened quite closely to the comments my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk made, and I wanted to express a little bit of solidarity with him. I met up with some of his steelworkers over the weekend, and I just thought I'd let him know that they had some very gratifying words to express towards our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the work that our caucus actually delivered on this budget. Did it have all the answers that labour was looking for? Absolutely not, but it did reflect a lot of the needs that labour, along with our party, stands for in order to make life more affordable for people across this province.

It baffles me sometimes. We still are expecting Ontarians to pay more and do with less, where governments are saying, through austerity measures, "We're not going to be able to provide for you. You're going to have to pay more. You're going to have to pay more tolls in order to get roads. You're going to have to accept less service to receive in your communities."

I just can't understand why we continue going down that road. I believe that's one of the biggest things that make us different from the other two parties that are in this House.

I hear the member when he talked about the job losses across this province; I agree with you. I'm one of those statistics, if you want to use that, that went through job losses. But if you really look at why those jobs are gone, it didn't just happen overnight; these decisions, these policies, were created a long time ago. You just have to look at the energy decisions that were made a long time ago by the privatization of our energy. That was one of the instrumental, biggest problems that have happened throughout this province. Until we grasp our minds of how we're going to change that—even now, recently, people in Algoma–Manitoulin have received a notice that their energy bills are going to go up higher. So, if you want to look at reality, that's reality.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak about the budget bill. I want to remind the member from Haldimand–Norfolk about his comment about the concerns about the debt but, more importantly, about his party opposing the southwestern economic development fund, which helps industry, businesses in

southwestern Ontario and what have you. It is the opposition party who was against this development fund ensuring opportunity for the local businesses in his community.

The other piece is, as we know, government creates an environment that could provide opportunities, stimulate growth and, more importantly, promote investment, especially in the small business sector. I know in the budget the Minister of Finance talked about that, in terms of how to create an environment that promotes business in Ontario but also attracts international investment. Ontario is recognized as a top destination for foreign investment in North America, third only to California and New York State, in 2011. On a per capita basis, it is ranked the first of all major jurisdictions in North America. So I would challenge the member opposite, with respect to his comments about the government not doing enough to do jobs—all of us in this House are concerned when there's unemployment, especially dealing with young people.

That's why the government is putting aside \$295 million for two years to address the youth unemployment rate across Ontario. It's not just about finding jobs for those who have lost a job but also to ensure that young people are given an opportunity.

I also want to remind the member opposite—because at the end of the day we're here to work together, not to attack each other. Yes, yes, the member from Thornhill: Yes, we're working together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate to make some comments. As we go back, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt spoke about the southwest developmental fund and the impacts there. Quite frankly, the community in Oshawa was looking for the same sort of support that was taking place when you deal with issues like that. What has taken place is that the government chose certain sectors of the province that will be winners and losers. What needs to take place, quite frankly, is we need policies that will attract businesses.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin, in his comments, spoke about the cost of energy going up in the province of Ontario and the impact there. You only need to look at the wind turbines in Algoma, on the island of Manitoulin, and see what has happened there, the energy costs. When you're dealing with these issues as pertains to the budget—our party member speaking about the debt and the deficit—only look at what has taken place in Greece and the impact on that community there. Now, the funds are no longer available.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin mentioned that their party was different in looking at the way the budget was dealing with issues. Quite frankly, you need to move forward; I mean, just think of all the money that's being spent to service the debt at this particular time. If you're talking \$11 billion on an annual basis just to service a debt and the costs per hour, that certainly would go a long way in providing new programs and ensuring strong

municipalities and making sure that the future of Ontario creates those businesses by creating an environment that will attract business to the province of Ontario.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke about the steelworkers and the jobs there, as what's taking place in regards to the budget and creating an environment that brings those businesses in and encourages them to foster. We see it's not happening in the way of the auto sector. Quite frankly, Oshawa at one time had over 22,000 workers working at General Motors; now we have about 2,200. Recently, though, we lost the Camaro and the impact on that. We need to create the environment to bring businesses to the province to make it strong once again.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I guess we're having a general discussion here today, not specifically on any set aspects of the budget, and I think that's a good exercise to undertake. It has been focused on some of the jobs losses at US Steel. I would argue that these job losses are as a result of capitalism, the free market and ultimately free trade. I know that; I speak from experience, Mr. Speaker. I come from Windsor, which undoubtedly has been at the epicentre of the massive loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario and in Canada.

We currently live in a province that has absolutely no—zero—direction, zero policy on manufacturing. It's a massive gap, vacuum, in direction and in focus. And I would say we should be starting with that as soon as possible to ensure that our research and development dollars are being used adequately, to ensure that we are competing with other jurisdictions that are doing the right things in terms of leveraging their public infrastructure and their public dollars, their universities and so on and so forth, also adding value to their resources, something that we don't do here; that we don't even want to do. It's not a policy that has been embarked on at the provincial level nor at the federal level.

We can talk about the foreign investment review, a process that would put a stop to companies like US Steel and Caterpillar coming in, absolutely hollowing out these historic companies that have provided good, tangible jobs and bringing them to the lowest wage jurisdictions on the planet. If we're not going to do anything about that, then they can't stand in good conscience and proclaim to defend good-paying jobs. You have to actually look at the root causes, and the root causes are, as I said, a focus on globalization and a capitalist free market society that doesn't really care about rules and regulations or protecting those valued industries.

Mr. Speaker, I can't wait to have 20 minutes on the subject, because there's certainly lots more to talk about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes our time for questions and comments. I

return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker—valuable comments from members.

The member for Algoma–Manitoulin made reference to the joblessness. I know I made reference to London, with a 9.9% unemployment rate. I think of so many towns across the north, and I really don't want to think about the unemployment rate in so many of those communities. As was mentioned, much of it relates to the price of energy.

I made mention of the Nanticoke coal-fired plant. This coming December will be the end of that plant, thank you to Mr. McGuinty. Sarnia–Lambton—my colleague next door—is another one that's being shut down. In the north now, there have been some adjustments to Atikokan, and the threat to Thunder Bay.

The member for Scarborough–Agincourt threw out a challenge. Again, I refer—I actually throw the challenge back. It is incumbent on this government to implement so many ideas. There are hundreds of ideas that can be implemented to, at minimum, help ameliorate or help release the province of Ontario not only from deficit but from debt, rather than, as I see in this government, a string of unaffordable commitments that only continue to exacerbate the problems. Indeed, rather than meeting our fiscal challenges from a position of strength, I see a government meeting them from a position of weakness.

The member for Oshawa has an admirable 18-year track record in this House in working with the autoworkers. He made mention of—what was it there?—22,000 autoworkers down to 2,200. We've seen the same trend with our steelworkers. It's a trend that is not sustainable if we're to maintain the standard of living we wish to aspire to in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in this debate and to speak for about 20 minutes on what I think of this budget and how it's unfolded.

The budget process is not just May 2, when the minister stands in his seat and delivers a budget speech. Much goes into the preparation of a budget, and I just want to talk a little bit about the members of the finance committee.

Well, let's start even earlier than that. We had a period here in Ontario, starting in October until February, in which the House did not sit. We were prorogued; there was no business going on whatsoever. In that period, which is normally the period when the finance committee starts its deliberations, when we start hearing from the people of the province, when we start finding out what they in fact want to see in the budget, we were all at home in our ridings unable to do so. There were no committees, and there was no work going on in the Legislature.

When the government saw fit to call the House back on February 19, the process finally began. It began very

slowly. It took a couple of days in order to set up the finance committee, to hear the throne speech, to get things moving. In a very short period of time—shorter, I think, than the finance committee has ever taken, at least in the last 10 years, to travel the province, to try to find out what people were saying, what they wanted—we were able to hear only about 100 deputations. We were able to go to some four cities, we were able to hear people here in Toronto and we were able to get some background details.

As a result of those deliberations, we had some very difficult choices to make, as did, I'm sure, the finance minister and the government and the cabinet. They had difficult choices to make, too. With a finite amount of money, and people asking for areas in the budget that they wanted to be improved or changed, we had a lot to look at.

It was the New Democrats' decision to table seven demands during the budget process. It was a little unusual. My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo and I put forward those seven demands in the finance committee itself, and it was very strange. If you read the Hansard, you will see that the vote was 2 to 0 in order of those demands, with all of the government members sitting on their hands and the official opposition sitting on their hands. It was just the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and I who raised our hands in support of what the NDP wanted to see in the budget.

The reason we did this is because last year's budget was so contentious. The NDP was seeking a great number of things within the body of the budget and made detailed recommendations of what we wanted to see and didn't want to see. When the budget process saw itself through to the end, we found people like former member Greg Sorbara standing in his seat and accusing the NDP of all kinds of things and that we were reneging on some kind of deal which we hadn't made. So we wanted it very clear and very transparent, on the face of the record, what New Democrats were seeking in this budget and what we thought would take place to improve whatever the Liberals were going to bring forward.

We are somewhat satisfied, I would think, with what has come forward, but there are a whole bunch of difficulties that are inherent in this budget, and in fact any budget. One only has to look at how it's unfolding since May 2. People watching on television may not realize, but we're only a couple of hours into the budget debate. The finance minister has spoken. The leader of the official opposition has spoken. The leader of the third party has spoken. This is the first through of the 20-minute rotations.

The budget cannot be called for a vote until one of a couple of things happens: either there's eight hours of debate or 10 sessional days have passed. The tenth sessional day is tomorrow, and I doubt very much at that point that we will have reached the eight hours of debate, unless we come back and do it all day again tomorrow, which I think will be a bit of an impossibility. So when government members stand up and say, "All you have to

do is pass the budget. Pass the budget now, and we can do the things that are contained in the budget," it is they who have the responsibility, it is the government House leader who has the responsibility, to call the budget for debate, and they have not seen fit over these first nine days to call it any more than a couple of hours.

So what we're talking about as it unfolds is in the knowledge that this vote may or may not take place within the next few days, because I have no idea what the government is going to be doing, whether they're going to allow those additional hours of debate, which will allow for a vote to take place.

1530

In the meantime, the universe, of course, is unfolding as it should. When you open up the newspaper this morning, you see that the Metrolinx report has been leaked. Like almost every government document, it's leaked in advance. I never expect to hear it in this House, although that's the way it's supposed to happen. It is a very rare day when a minister stands up these days and actually says something to the whole world from his or her seat. Usually, I read about it in the *Toronto Star* or the *Globe and Mail* or some other newspaper, because it is leaked on purpose in order that the government can get the spin they want before the actual announcement is made.

Well, this morning I read the spin on Metrolinx. If you wonder, Mr. Speaker, how that is contained within the budget, it is, in fact, because the budget talked at some considerable length about how we were going to need additional revenues, some \$2 billion a year, in order to end the gridlock in the greater Toronto–Hamilton area. I say "Hamilton" and turn to my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, because the mayor of Mississauga is wondering how Hamilton is now in the mix. I think Hamilton needs to be in the mix.

What I read today—what Metrolinx is recommending to this government—is that they find an increase of some \$2 billion, to be taken out of the pockets of ordinary people. What I read today in the newspapers is that Metrolinx is saying that we need to increase the sales tax by 1%, which will bring in approximately \$1.4 billion in new revenues. What they're saying today is that there needs to be a parking levy imposed, at some 25 cents per space, which will bring in \$350 million; a five-cents gas tax, an additional five cents on top of the \$1.36 which I spent for gas yesterday here in Toronto, for an additional \$330 million; the Lexus lanes, which they've left out but which are contained within the body of the budget; and then charges to developers, which will get some \$100 million—for a total of \$2 billion.

What Metrolinx—which is an arm of the government, reports to the government, is funded by the government and is leaked by the government—hasn't said anything about are the corporate tax loopholes and rates.

When a question was asked today by the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath, when she stood here in her place and asked a question of the Premier and the finance minister—"Can you tell us how much corporate tax giveaways you've given away in the last five years, and

is this fair when you juxtapose that against asking an extra \$2 billion from ordinary citizens, who are having a very difficult time paying their bills?"—there was no answer whatsoever. There was just the blah, blah, blah of this place when it's question period and you feel uncomfortable because you have no answer to give to a direct question.

The reality is that there is some money from corporate taxes if the government only wanted to take it. We also asked a follow-up question: What about the \$1.3 billion of HST money that is going to be lost to this government next year, 2014-15, when the loophole goes back in, when corporations can then not pay their HST that they're supposed to pay on ordinary things like hockey games and restaurant meals and gas taxes and buying automobiles, and a hundred things?

I wish, as a consumer, that I didn't have to pay the HST on all those things too, but we do. Each and every person in this room, each and every person in the whole breadth of Ontario, all 13 million of us have to pay that. But who doesn't have to pay it? The biggest corporations and the banks; they're going to be exempt. If they had to pay what all of us have to pay, there would be another \$1.3 billion in the treasury. That's \$1.3 billion—we wouldn't have to increase the sales tax, which would raise exactly the same amount. That means everybody would save 1% on their sales taxes in order to pay for the infrastructure that we so desperately need.

But oh, no, that's not the Liberal way. The Liberal way is to say we're going to make them exempt so they can create jobs. But we all know what a fallacy that is. We all know there are no jobs. We all know what the unemployment rate is in London and Windsor. We all know what the unemployment rate is in North Bay and in whole swaths across this country and across this province. And they refuse to answer the questions.

It's been very troubling from the beginning that it's not in the budget speech and it's not in any of the projections the government is making. This \$1.3 billion would certainly assuage my fears of where we're going and, I think, would make the people of Ontario feel a good deal more comfortable in where we're going to find the \$2 billion a year to get out of gridlock.

I have not in my entire political career met a single person who likes gridlock, nor do I expect to meet one. I have not met a single person who does not think there are some solutions. But what I think is lacking in this whole exercise to date is fairness. Is it only the consumer who is going to have to pay? If that's true, why do we allow trucks on the road? If that's true, why do we allow all these people in commerce to be using these roads to make money? I think they have an obligation, just as we ordinary drivers have an obligation, to make sure our roads are unclogged, that there is public transit available for those who do not use their cars and to make public transit more affordable and easier to take, so that people are willing to get out of their cars.

If you travel around the world, you will see that in those places that have good public transportation, where

governments pay for it and where governments do not make riders pay the majority of the costs of running a public transportation system, they work far better than what we have here in Ontario, where the government got out of the business many years ago and continues to stay out of the business, even just a couple of years ago taking \$4 billion out of the budget for that year and pushing it back. If that \$4 billion had been left in that budget, we would be a long way toward ending gridlock at this point and actually building the infrastructure that we need.

I looked this morning as well, in question period, because New Democrats asked a lot about fairness for ordinary people. We asked about auto insurance. We know that the rates are the highest in Ontario, and we know that insurance companies are continuing to make a fairly hefty profit. I know that after I spoke the last time on insurance companies, I got a very nice letter from the Insurance Bureau telling me of the little errors they felt I had made in my speech.

Of course, it was the errors that I think they made in their presentation as well, because they do make a 9% profit. You know, a 9% profit to somebody in the manufacturing sector is a lot of money. In their sector, they said it wasn't all from auto insurance. Yes, I know that. One who is diversified in any kind of industry or commerce knows that you make money in certain areas at certain times and in others you don't, but they make 9% overall.

If you can make 9% profit and you can be given a windfall, as they were given with the changes to the legislation so that catastrophic injuries have been moved way down the list, and where they have been given a whole bunch of other benefits in terms of the arbitration process and how monies are meted out, then of course they are going to be making some money. We in the New Democratic Party only think it's fair that some of that money comes back to consumers, and we suggested 15%. The government says they're going to go along somehow, in some way, with the 15%—

Interjection: And hope that we support them on it.

Mr. Michael Prue: —and hope that we support them on it, although it's caged in very strange language, I must say.

But a question was asked today by my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, who is here with us today. He asked a very good question in the House, and I have to state—I hope he asked for a late show—that he got the most unsatisfactory answer in terms of what he was asking, because in his constituency, people are complaining that their insurance rates are going up 15%, not down 15%.

Now, if I was a person who was a conspiracist or something, I would think this was the insurance industry saying, "Let's knock 'em all up 15% now, because in a couple of months, we're going to have to knock 'em all down 15%, and we're going to end up exactly where we were." I'm hoping that the government is watching this. I don't know whether they're watching this or not, but they should be watching this, because this is not what we in

the New Democratic Party are expecting. We are expecting that an industry which has a near-monopoly, and I know there are many insurance companies—because you are forced, if you are a driver, to have insurance; you cannot drive without it—then we think that people should have some kind of safeguard that they're not going to be gouged.

1540

We think the answer that was given by the minister was very unsatisfactory. We started out with no time frame in terms of the 15%, and now we have no real answer in terms of what is happening out there when people are getting increases in their insurance at a time when they should be getting decreases. The minister ended off by saying that, "If you just pass the budget, we can start all this now." How can we in the opposition party, whether we're going to vote for it or against it, do that when the government has refused to call this for the first—this is the ninth legislative day following the budget. We haven't had eight hours of debate. It's up to the government to call it. It's up to the government to act on it, and the government has seen fit to sit on its hands for these entire nine days. So don't be blaming the opposition about passing or not passing your budget if you haven't even called it. It's up to you to do it, and do it with some dispatch if you're going to do it, in order to save those poor people some money.

I'd like to talk a bit about social assistance rates and poverty. There was 1% contained within the body of the budget. If you are unfortunate enough to be on Ontario Works and get 500-and-some dollars a month, you're going to get an extra \$14 raise. This is so far below the poverty rate that it is unbelievable.

I have to state that this government has not been fair to the poor. When the Harris government, and Mike Harris himself in his first budget, brought down and then slashed welfare rates by some 21%—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Twenty-two per cent.

Mr. Michael Prue: Twenty-two per cent, I'm being reminded here—that was a dark day. But that day is not near so dark as what the Liberals have done for the last 10 years. Because of inflation, they are actually worse off today than they were in the deepest and darkest days of Mike Harris. I don't know how any Liberal over there, any government member, can be proud of the 1%. I don't know how you can be proud of what you have done to the poorest of the poor people in this province, and I don't know what you can be proud of for those people who are on ODSP benefits. It's pretty sad when the government stands up and talks about 1% as being something good in the budget. It's not good at all.

It's not good what you have done in terms of the special diet. It's not very good in terms of—a slight benefit, I guess, in terms of increased assets and the Trillium benefit. That was a hard-fought battle by New Democrats, and I guess by me asking all those questions over all those years, asking questions about why people who are poor, people who don't have a lot of money, people on fixed incomes, seniors, couldn't choose how to

take their money. They had to be doled out little amounts each month. Many of them wanted to take a lump sum. So if there was one good thing in the budget, I have to say that negotiating finally with the federal government to allow people to spend their own money and obtain it in their own way is at least one small thing that came forward.

I want to talk about the Ontario Child Benefit. It is a year behind schedule, and those people who were from 25 in 5 who were here watching the budget left with tears in their eyes. They didn't come here full of praise or leave here full of praise. They are one year behind, and this government cannot and will not meet its 25-in-5 commitment. So there's another thing in terms of poverty.

With 36 seconds left, I just want to say that I was pleased when the Minister of Health in this week's paper said that she is finally going to look at having some form of Ombudsman control over health. It needs to be there. We asked for that. And the budget officer will do a great thing for Ontario once it is instituted.

I am proud of the work New Democrats have done. Is this a New Democrat budget, as my friends in the Conservatives often say? No, it is not; it is a Liberal budget that has been tweaked as much as we could possibly tweak it in the months that we've had. We need to do better. We can do better, and with a New Democratic government in the future, we will do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: After 20 minutes of covering all the issues, I don't know how to respond to the member from Beaches–East York.

I think that just looking at what we've done with poverty, and to just read from the act: "The government is committed to helping the people of Ontario share the benefits of this great province. Building a prosperous and fair Ontario means addressing poverty.

"In 2008, the government introduced a comprehensive five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy that set a target to reduce child poverty by 25%." It was at just the beginning of a major recession—the worst recession since the Great Depression—but we stuck to that.

"The strategy included the Ontario Child Benefit ... for low- to moderate-income families"—and that, again, is going to be increased by \$100 in the next two years.

"The strategy has lifted about 40,000 children out of poverty. Without the Poverty Reduction Strategy, an estimated 16.7% of Ontario children would have been living in low-income families in 2010. As a result of the strategy, the actual child poverty rate was 13.8%." So even in the worst recession that the western world has seen—it's not specific to Ontario—we stuck with the Poverty Reduction Strategy and we've made headway. That is very important.

The other thing that we have to look at is education. One of the statistics I like to come back to when you're looking at what has been done over these last few years is that "115,500 more students have graduated than

otherwise would have, had the rate remained at the 2003-04 level"—115,500, almost a riding's worth of kids who have graduated from high school and have that hope for a job.

Speaker, I think this is a great budget, and I hope that we can pass it in due course before the summer's out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments on the member from Beaches—East York. The member had mentioned the changes that took place with the Conservative government in 1995, but you have to go back to prior to that to what took place at that particular time. If you look at what happened with the NDP, they were spending \$12 billion more annually in the province of Ontario than they were taking in. Quite frankly, yes, there were some changes in the province of Ontario, but there were a million people who came off the dependency rolls at that particular time. There was a number of programs that were available for individuals in the province of Ontario.

If you look at the amount of employment that took place, it was second to none. I mean governors in Florida and Michigan once upon a time stated that they were concerned. Ontario used to be the number one job provider when the third party was in power, but when that government came in, they were concerned because they were losing a lot of jobs.

Some of the things I want to talk about as well, in the time that's allowing, the member mentioned insurance rates. Well, if you look at what happened with the government in the past: The insurance company will file for the insurance rates with the understanding that, quite frankly, they're not going to get everything they ask for. So the government of the day stated that it was a 10% drop. What happened was they put in for a 20% increase and were only given a 10% increase. So from the government's perspective, the political words that were used were: "We saved everybody 10%." From the industry perspective: We all paid 10% more. Those are some of the things that we have to watch out for in how these things unfold.

There are a significant number of ways that we can make some substantial changes within that industry, and I think that my colleague and I will be introducing some legislation, probably within the next two weeks, that will start to address some of those things in ways that we can actually come out with some concrete ways to fiscally address the concerns of the high insurance costs in the province of Ontario. I think that all are going to benefit from it.

We need to hear the whole story, from all perspectives, on what took place on all these issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the comments from the member from Beaches—East York, who quite rightly points out that there's a huge amount of work that still needs to be done. But what New Demo-

crats quite rightly did—and we had the mandate from the people of the province of Ontario—was try to make this budget work for the people of this province. So we did.

We pursued the home care initiative, a huge issue in the province of Ontario: 6,200 people are on wait-lists waiting for home care. The PCs chose not to do anything in that regard. Youth employment is twice the national average in the province of Ontario. We need to do something to get these youth back into the workplace so they can have the experience, so that they can move forward with their lives. The PCs chose not to do anything.

1550

What did we do? We actually took a stand on affordability for the people of this province. Auto insurance—this is a new issue, with auto insurance companies raising the rates prior to this ever-so-important budget coming to pass. We're going to be following this very carefully and we're not going to let the Liberals turn a blind eye on this issue. We are watching very carefully because this is a condition of the budget. What did the PCs do? Nothing, and this is what we have.

Now, I was knocking on doors on Friday morning, and the financial accountability office has great traction in the province of Ontario. You know what people want? They want that measure of accountability for any government that goes forward, NDP, Liberal or PCs—well, they don't want a PC government. They're very clear about that. If there's one thing on the doorstep, it's the fear factor with regard to the PCs. There is no room for negotiation on that issue, I can assure you.

So what have we done? We are trying to hold the government to account. That is our job. The people of this province appreciate the fact that we are trying to do our job. You are doing nothing, and you're proud of it. Good for you. We are staying focused on the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm really delighted to be able to speak for a couple of minutes on this budget. I think this is a brilliant budget. I think it touches many people and provides a little more help in everyday lives. It's also done within the context of fiscal responsibility.

One item that I really do want to comment on is the additional investment in home care and care in the community. It's true that the NDP have been supportive of this additional investment, but I do have to point out that their request was for \$30 million, and we're adding an additional \$185 million. So from \$30 million to \$185 million dollars, I think, demonstrates our real commitment to shifting health care to the community so people can get the support they need in their homes for as long as possible.

I had the honour of visiting a family on Friday with the Premier in London. On Thursday, I shadowed a personal support worker as she did her work in visiting a home. We met with a wonderful woman named Eva, who's well into her 80s, doing a fantastic—the personal support worker, Juliette Chestney, is doing a wonderful

job supporting that woman and her family. We then went to visit a young man, Ilish, who is just 20 years old and suffers from Duchenne dystrophy. He has required intensive personal support, but he's a university student. He's a student at the University of Guelph, studying geography. He's able to get on with his life because of the support available to him in the community.

These are stories that are inspiring, and these are stories that drive our commitment to deliver more care in the community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches—East York has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank my colleagues, the member from Ottawa—Orléans, the member from Oshawa, the member from Kitchener—Waterloo and the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, for their comments.

Just a couple of things I'd like to—I don't know whether "rebut" is the right word—talk about. The member from Ottawa—Orléans talked about the Ontario Child Benefit. There is no one in this House who would deny that this Ontario Child Benefit is helping people out of poverty. The problem we have on this side of the House is that you're a year late. You're not going to make the commitment that you made to the people of Ontario to decrease poverty by 25% in five years. If the monies were forthcoming, as were promised, you would have been on target. Because the monies were not forthcoming, those people in the 25 in 5 who were here in the galleries on budget day are quite concerned, and rightly so, that the money is not going to be there. The government is not going to meet its target and poverty is going to continue, albeit at a slightly better level than it was four years ago. But you're not doing what you promised, and that's the difficulty they have.

For the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, sure, you raised the ante. We asked for \$30 million, which was for a five-day guarantee. You're spending \$185 million with no guarantee, and that's the problem that we have. We want to have a five-day guarantee so that if you live in New Liskeard or Timiskaming or if you live in the furthest-flung areas of this province, you can have the same kind of service and guarantee that you can have in a big city like Toronto. That's what we're looking for, so that all of the people of Ontario can share in the wealth and the bounty and the opportunity that they should all have. A five-day guarantee would do it, and it would only cost \$30 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important motion dealing with the 2013 Ontario budget. I'm sure it will not come as any surprise that I'm very proud of this budget. I'm very proud of this budget as to its values and what it stands for and what it means for the people of Ontario.

In my 20 minutes, Speaker, I'm going to focus on a few key things I think that are important to my

community in Ottawa Centre, and also will share with you what the good people of Ottawa Centre are talking about when it comes to this budget as I'm out at different community events day after day, when I'm at home, when I'm knocking on doors, and the feedback I'm receiving.

My urging, starting right off the bat, is that I hope that all members in the House will be voting in support of this budget. The way I see it, this is a fair, balanced and a Liberal budget. It really speaks to fairness to Ontarians. It really brings that very critical ingredient, that we need a measurement by which we make decisions—that fairness to the people. I think this budget really strikes at the right core when it comes to ensuring that we are building a fair Ontario.

It also balances the needs in terms of growing our economy and helping create jobs in our economy and also ensuring that we are looking after the vulnerable, be it through youth unemployment issues or by transforming social assistance so those who may be on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program have the necessary support they need to be able to live in our society.

Of course, Speaker, I'm really proud that this is a Liberal budget. This is a budget that very much reflects the priorities of the Liberal Party, the priorities that the Premier has been speaking about before she became the Premier and during her leadership race. I think that really well encapsulates the Liberal values. So I stand here, Speaker, with pride that this is a fair and a Liberal budget.

In my view, I think the budget really focuses on three important things. The very number one focus is ensuring that we eliminate the deficit. We have talked about the deficit, which is now at \$9.8 billion; it's \$5 billion ahead of where it was projected to be. We are the only government in Canada, and I think we should be very proud of the fact, that is on target, in fact ahead of target.

You know, we often hear about the federal government and how well they may be doing. In fact, Speaker, every year the federal government deficit has grown. They've got the same target. They don't want to talk the truth to the people, perhaps, but their deficit has grown this year by \$6 billion.

Our deficit has gone down by \$5 billion because of the discipline and the hard work of this government in ensuring that we are reducing our expenses in a smart way, ensuring that we're bringing down the deficit so that we can balance the books by 2017-18. That is a very important priority of this budget. We will continue to remain focused on that, but we'll do it in a smart way. We'll do it in an intelligent fashion. We will do it in a way that does not take support away from Ontarians, but also ensures that we pay down the deficit.

Just if you look at, for example, the expenditure of the last two years, we've been able to bring it down significantly, raising the expenses less than 1%. People doubted us, but the numbers don't lie. The numbers are there, and you can see that in terms of our deficit, which is under \$10 billion ahead of projection.

1600

The second very important aspect of this budget is around growing our economy and helping our businesses to create jobs. We know that we have lived through a very serious recession. The recession of 2008 and 2009 is called the great recession for a reason, the reason being that it was one of the largest downturns in an economy since the Great Depression that took place—not only just in Ontario, not only just in Canada, but around the globe. Of course, Canada and Ontario were hit by that recession as well.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: But we fought through it.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: But we fought through it because we made investments in our communities. Every single community that is represented in this Legislature benefited from the stimulus of dollars that were invested in our economies to ensure that we create jobs in local economies.

Again, that's not something that the Ontario government did by themselves; the federal government did the same thing. In fact, all governments across the country, including the federal government, borrowed money in order to stimulate our economy. It was the right decision to make in order to ensure that we fight that recession.

The effects of the recession—even though, technically, we're no longer in recession—are still there. You can see how global economies are vulnerable. You can see how political leaders around the world are still talking about the economy. We can see how slowly the US economy is going. We, of course, in Ontario—Ontario's economy relies on what happens in the US. We need to make sure that our economy continues to grow.

We have a lot to be proud of because we have actually recovered all the jobs that were lost during the recession in Ontario. In fact, we have created more jobs than we had lost in that recession. That's something we collectively should all be very proud of. But there is more work to do.

So what is this budget doing? Well, first of all, there are no new taxes in this budget, both on the personal income tax level or at a corporate tax level. That is very important because that's a significant boost to our businesses, and they are very happy about that. But further to that, what we have done in this budget is outlined very targeted business cuts that will help small businesses, that will help our manufacturing businesses—two in particular.

One is around the employer health tax, where we have increased the limit for employer health tax from \$400,000 to \$450,000, and then beyond that it will be indexed. That is a benefit to small businesses in my community, in Ottawa Centre. When I'm out in, for example, Hintonburg, as I was last weekend, visiting the 10th anniversary of ArtsPark at the Parkdale Park, which is a beautiful park in my riding—ArtsPark is a great festival of crafts, art, music and food—there was that recognition that that type of measure is going to help our economy.

ArtsPark just celebrated its 10th anniversary, and I do want to quickly give a shout-out to the Hintonburg

Community Association for organizing that very successful festival: a big thanks to Anthony Bruni, Barbara Long, Cheryl Parrott, Dickson Davidson, Eddie Fu, Thomas Williams, James Valcke, Jeff Leiper, Jay Baltz, Kerry Millican, Linda Hoad, Matt Whitehead, Nicholas Olmstead, Pat O'Brien, Paulette Dozois, Robert McLean, Sharon Fernandez, Stefan Matiation and Wayne Rodney for the excellent work they do in the community. Thank you very much.

Further to growing our economy, Speaker, by extending the threshold or limit on employer health tax, we've also brought in something that the manufacturers have been asking for, and that is an accelerated depreciation in the capital cost lines for the manufacturing sector. Associations like Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are very happy with that move in this budget, because it's going to allow for our manufacturing sector to thrive.

The third significant element, in my view, is around the notion of creating a prosperous and fair Ontario, where we have made sure that we focus on the vulnerable population within our communities. For instance, I want to really thank the Minister of Community and Social Services for the emphasis around the transformation of social assistance on the basis of the Lankin-Sheikh report. The social assistance reform commission's report is very significant. The earning exemption, the increase in ODSP and OW rates, the better integration to employment—all of those steps are a great start to start implementing the Lankin-Sheikh recommendations.

What we're doing is we're really helping the most vulnerable in our communities, and I really hope that all members in this Legislature will support that. We all talk about how we need to ensure that people on disability or who are on Ontario Works need assistance, but here's a real way we can really help. This is a great start in terms of building that prosperous, fair society.

I'm also very proud, in this budget, around the investment in youth employment. I spend a lot of time working with youth in my community. That strategy, the youth employment strategy that we have put forward, is extremely exciting. Just this past week, in my community, I had the opportunity to attend the Spirit Awards, which is held by Youth Ottawa. It's a celebration of young people in our community who do amazing work. Many youth were celebrated for many, many achievements, and I congratulate them all.

There, I was having conversations with these young people. These are 16-, 17- and 18-year-old, extremely engaged young entrepreneurs, innovators and thinkers who said, "This is the right step. This is the right direction in having this dedicated \$295 million over a few years for a youth employment strategy, because it's going to really help our youth get the experiences they need." It really will provide them with the encouragement, the young entrepreneur or the innovator who has got these great ideas, and we want to get them out.

I thank all the volunteers at Youth Ottawa and the organizers of the Spirit Awards for their hard work and

for their encouragement for us to do the right thing in bringing such a youth employment strategy. It's going to help a lot of young people.

This is, of course, when you add it onto the kinds of things we are doing for early vaccination for our children, smaller class sizes in elementary school, the full-day kindergarten program, which is a huge success—the Waterloo region just actually came out with a report talking about how full-day kindergarten is making a difference. It's really giving the kids the kind of education that they need. That's where we need to continue investing. I'm really proud of all of the schools in my riding, in Ottawa Centre, which are bringing on full-day kindergarten, and those which are to come.

It's the same thing with 30% off for our post-secondary students. Carleton University students in my riding tell me how beneficial the 30% off has been for them. Now you add on the youth employment strategy, and you've got a really good picture for support from early years to adulthood in our province. I think that's something we should be proud of and passing in this budget.

In the limited time I've got left, I wanted to talk up two key issues that are also in this budget as they relate to my ministry, the Ministry of Labour. One is the creation of a minimum-wage advisory panel. If the budget is passed, the government is committing to create a minimum-wage advisory panel to ensure that we have a panel made up of an independent expert along with representatives from both businesses and employee groups, both unionized and non-unionized, and also, of course, with youth representation, so that they can consult over the next six months and give advice to the government as to what next steps the government should be taking in terms of minimum wage. That is important work that we need to do to ensure that we protect vulnerable workers, that we protect those workers who rely on minimum wage. I very much look forward to passage of this budget so that that panel can start its work.

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The other thing which is very important that is outlined in this budget, which is dependent on the passage of the budget, is an additional \$3 million for employment standards enforcement, making sure that we are protecting those employees who may not be treated fairly or whose rights under the Employment Standards Act are not protected. That is important, proactive enforcement work that our employment standards officers do in the Ministry of Labour. This \$3 million is in addition to the \$5.5 million that the government announced back in 2009, bringing the total to \$8.5 million per year. That could result in 1,400 more proactive inspections. It's something that a lot of groups such as United Way Toronto, which has done significant work along with McMaster and PEPSCO on precarious employment, have been asking for, and they're very happy to see that the government is moving on with that commitment. That is very much part and parcel of this budget, something that I encourage members opposite to approve.

Another thing I want to talk about, something personally that I worked with along with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, is schedule 5 in the budget act. That is related to changes in the e-commerce act for our realtors. There was an exception in the e-commerce act that took away e-signatures from purchase and sales agreements in realty matters. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings and I worked on a bill together—co-sponsored—to take that exception away. I'm really happy to see that that bill has made its way into the budget bill as schedule 5. I'm sure the member from Prince Edward-Hastings will be voting for this budget because that important work that he did is in there.

It was a pleasure to work with him. I think it really shows that when members work together on issues that are important to their communities, good things can happen. This is a very good example of it. I know that the realtors in my community and the Ontario Real Estate Association are very happy. They want this budget to pass because this is something that existed for a long time and they want to make sure that this becomes law.

Speaker, there are a few minutes left. I think I just want to bring it back home, which is always very important for me, and that's in Ottawa Centre. I was again, just this past weekend, out knocking on doors in the community in Glebe Annex. Before that I was at the Great Glebe Garage Sale, which is a great activity in the community. Thousands of dollars get raised for both Ecology Ottawa and the Ottawa Food Bank, whom I do a lot of work with—not to mention allows all of us to connect with community. Again, very good feedback on this budget.

One issue that came up again and again: People were happy to see that this budget, hopefully, will get passed. They don't want to see an election. They want the things that are outlined, and a few of the things that I mentioned in my comments today, coming into effect, which is extremely important for my community.

I was recently at Nepean High School, which is located in my riding in Westboro, which has now celebrated its 90th anniversary. I had the chance to meet with a lot of folks who were coming back for the 90th anniversary of Nepean High School. Great leaders have been produced out of that school. We talked about the importance of growing our economy, the importance of building a fair and prosperous society.

I want to give a big shout-out to the principal, Patrick McCarthy, for organizing that 90th anniversary; he did a fantastic job; his vice-principals, Kimberly Elmer and Peter Wilson, for their excellent work; the grad-year contacts for the event, Dave Slessor, the class of 1963, and Sharon Beauvais, class of 1972, in really organizing a marvellous celebration of Nepean High School and its 90th anniversary.

I think it was really inspiring for current students to see the great people who have come out of that high school and how they are doing so well in our community. I think we owe it to our students to pass this budget, because it is going to create more opportunities for them.

It is going to ensure that our children, starting from junior kindergarten all the way to a PhD, have those opportunities available to them to be successful in this highly competitive, globalized and engaged economy.

It wasn't that long ago that I was in school, but when I now spend time with young people, I marvel to see how differently they think now, what kinds of tools are available to them. The kinds of things that are available in this budget—for example, the youth employment strategy—will create that opportunity to really help our students to grow. There is that excitement. There is that demand out there, and I really mean a demand out there for this legislative body to pass this budget to make sure that we get on with the business of the people, that we all work together. The manner in which the member from Prince Edward-Hastings and I did in finding those common issues and work together and further the agenda of the people—I'm really proud that this budget does that. I hope everybody will vote in favour of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm happy to rise to talk to some of the comments made by the Minister of Labour. It's interesting, when he talks about this government being ahead of its deficit goals—a goal that they put in place and can't even meet. It's an artificial goal that's stated—that I guess would be easy to meet, especially when you're spending the amount of money they are. They must have trouble spending that amount of money. That deficit is higher than all the other provinces combined in this country, so I don't know how you can be proud of that.

It's hard to believe that Ontario—frankly, it's a third of the population—all the other provinces combined is less than what this deficit is. Just last month, or a couple of months ago, Maclean's magazine picked Ontario as the most likely to default on its loan, or on its deficit and debt. That's what we're looking forward to with this government.

He talked about help for manufacturers. We look back at the results of this government. We're looking at the highest hydro rates on this continent, the highest property taxes on this continent. WSIB rates are the highest in the country. TSSA roadblocks—companies are leaving because this province is no longer competitive. We can look at Caterpillar. We can look at Xstrata going to Quebec because the price of power is so much less. We have to start doing things in this province that actually encourage jobs.

When you talk about a task force looking at the minimum wage, I believe it's time that we stopped looking at providing more people on minimum wage and we start looking at creating jobs, to give people good jobs with good salaries. It's the wrong attitude to be looking at how we pay people who don't have a job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to stand here today on behalf of London-Fanshawe constituents and contribute to the budget.

We seem to lose sight of why we're here and how we got here. We got here from the people in our ridings. They elected a minority government, and that's a very clear message that the Conservatives really haven't heeded. When it's a minority government, they're saying all three parties need to work together to come up with solutions to get things done for Ontario, to help the people of Ontario, and that's what we did. We don't want to hear the criticism about how this is a Liberal-NDP budget. This is not an NDP budget. It's called "democracy." We spoke up and gave our suggestions. The government listened. We worked to find solutions and get results.

I just want to comment on the member saying that we shouldn't be having a task force to look at minimum wage jobs; we need to create jobs. We certainly need to create jobs, and we came up with plans for that. We came up with the First Start program for youth to create good-paying jobs. However, the reality of what's going on in Ontario is that minimum-wage jobs are people who can't find real jobs. Again, I'm not saying—I have to correct that. Every job has value, but when you have somebody who is trying to put food on the table, and it's a \$10.75-minimum-wage job, they're a single mother and they're struggling. I think it's very beneficial to have a minimum-wage panel so that we can make sure people have jobs that are going to actually help them put food on the table and a roof over their heads, and not struggle and live below the poverty line or on the poverty line. It's not the way we want to see Ontario move forward.

I hope the Conservatives will, if that comes to committee, support a minimum-wage review panel.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure again to stand in my place here in this chamber and speak to the issue that's at hand today.

I want to begin by commending the Minister of Labour, the member from Ottawa Centre, for his very eloquent and articulate comments with respect to this year's budget. It's no mistake, I suppose, that this particular member spends so much of his time and focus on the people who have sent him to this place, the wonderful residents of Ottawa Centre. He is perhaps the hardest-working member in the Legislature, both in his riding and beyond. I think the comments that he made today were right on the money with respect to what's in this year's budget.

Of course, as a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, he would understand the process, the balance, the reasonableness and the fairness that are embedded in this year's document with respect to making sure that we pay off the deficit and we bring our books back to balance, on target, by 2017-18 and make sure that we restore some more fairness into the system for those at the lowest end of the economic scale.

I would also comment, having just taken a moment to listen to some of the members opposite, on the member

from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and his comments. I was a little bit surprised with respect to some of the stuff that he talked about, but it's fairly symptomatic of what we've heard from the folks in the official opposition over the last number of weeks and months. I'll say again today what I've said in the past: Instead of taking the more constructive approach of the members of the third party—I sincerely wish that the members of the official opposition would reconsider their irresponsible position of weeks, if not months, ago, take a look again at what's in this year's budget, recognize that the comments made by the Minister of Labour are right on the money, and find a way, for the sake of all of Ontario—for the sake of our economy, for the sake of building that more fair society—to listen closely to what the Minister of Labour said today, to reconsider that ill-advised move and to support this budget to keep moving our province forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to bring comments to the Minister of Labour. He spent most of his time talking about how proud he was of the accomplishments. To my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry's credit, he brought up a very poignant point: an \$11.9-billion deficit and they're proud of it. How can you be proud of that when you've had record revenues your whole term in office? For nine years they've been doing this. How can they be proud of a \$1.9-billion fee per hour being added to our debt clock? How can they be proud of a \$21,000 debt for every single child brought into this beautiful province? How can they be proud of doubling the debt in their eight years? How can they be proud of wasting a billion dollars on eHealth and another billion dollars on gas plants that have produced not one kilowatt per hour of power?

Despite all of this, they're proud about doubling the energy rates that have chased most of our industry out of the province—

Mr. Rob Leone: Tripling.

Mr. Bill Walker: Tripling energy rates, and it's going to get worse.

Some 500,000 to 600,000 people are unemployed, and what are they doing about that? They've decimated the horse racing industry, 30,000 to 60,000 jobs, particularly in rural Ontario. They've tripled the skilled trades tax. It used to be \$60 for three years; now it's a hundred bucks plus taxes—HST that they promised not to implement, by the way, to those people.

Every time you turn around, they're spending and taxing and taxing and spending. It's the Liberal way. The NDP are more than happy to step right up there and say, "You are corrupt, Mr. Bad Government Over There in the House." Every morning we hear, "You're corrupt, you're horrible, you're decimating our province. However, if you give us enough baubles in this next budget, we'll be there and there won't be an election."

No, we're going to stand on our principles and we're going to talk about what we won't do. What we won't do

is we won't sit over here and sit on our hands during a vote. We'll make sure we stand up for the people who sent us here. We'll make sure we hold this government to account every day that we're here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Labour has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Vaughan and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their kind and at times colourful commentary to my remarks on the budget.

Speaker, I'm very proud of my government. I'm very proud of what our government has accomplished over the last 10 years. I think anybody who follows provincial politics knows the kind of mess the previous Conservative government left us: a \$5.6-billion deficit when they claimed there was none. We took two years to get that deficit cleaned up. After that, we had three back-to-back balanced budgets, and then came the recession of 2008 and 2009. Not just Ontario, but across this country—including the federal government, which by the way had a surplus of \$13 billion or \$14 billion—we have massive deficits. Why? Because they borrowed money in order to stimulate our economy.

As a result, we were able to save hundreds of thousands of auto manufacturing jobs that have an impact in all our communities, we were able to build critical infrastructure in all our communities and we were able to do so by helping the vulnerable in our communities as well.

From the beginning—I know the opposition doesn't like to hear this—we've been honest with people. We've laid out the date of 2017-18 as a time to balance the deficit. Everybody mocked, because the federal government apparently had a shorter timeline. The record is that their deficit continues to go up. They are nowhere close to meeting their timeline, whereas we are ahead of our projection. We're down to \$9.8 billion, and sooner than later we will have the deficit erased and ensure that our economy is growing.

Let's support this budget and get to the work of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Bill Walker: Now listen to this one.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to thank the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for welcoming me so graciously and with such passion.

I'm always pleased to stand in this House to debate bills and legislation and motions that are before this Legislature, and perhaps none is more important than the budget—the budget that the NDP are poised to support. In the course of my 20 minutes here today, I will certainly talk about that.

I do want to touch upon something the member from Beaches–East York talked about earlier today with respect to the time and the rules around talking about the very motion we're speaking to today and the potential

that the debate be limited on something that's pretty important to the people of Ontario. I echo those concerns that he made, and I congratulate him for making them far more elaborately, and perhaps even more eloquently, than I have.

We entered this chamber today on the heels of a constituency week. Obviously, during a constituency week, we have an opportunity to connect with the people in our riding, see our families a bit more and hear their concerns. On the Friday—constituency week for me started before the long weekend—I was doing a high school civics class in Cambridge; it was a good opportunity. I like doing those, because I think we need to do more to encourage youth to be interested in the proceedings of politics, whatever they construe that to be, and certainly they want to know a bit more about a day in the life of an MPP. I hoped to provide them with such an illustration of what it looks like in terms of the daily grind, so to speak, of the Legislature. I showed them, of course, how busy we could be in the Legislature and how long our days are. That's obviously part of what we do; we're here in the Legislature.

One student asked me at one point, "So are you sitting at Queen's Park all year round?" I answered the question as anyone would, of course, telling the truth and saying that the answer is no, we don't. There's a reason we don't sit at Queen's Park year-round, and it's because we have an ancient parliamentary tradition that states that we as MPPs—as commoners—are subject to the laws, the policies we create, and we have to live by them. That's why we go back to our homes. That's why we do things with our families as ordinary families do, because we have to live by the laws that we create. I think that's an important understanding of why we have constituency week, and we shouldn't lose the underlying meaning of that because it gives us an opportunity as members of this Legislature to actually connect with people in very important ways.

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I want to go over some of the events and proceedings that I took part in during my constituency week and tell this Legislature what I heard. I think it's important to bring those concerns that are brought up by our constituents to the floor of this Legislature, particularly in matters that are of great importance such as a budget speech. Certainly, when I woke up on the Tuesday of that week to learn that the NDP were going to support the budget that was presented by the Liberal Party and the Liberal government, that started off the week in a very interesting way. In many ways, it set the pattern for the kinds of things that I would hear over the course of the week. I've been on record as saying that I don't believe that decision was a particularly wise one for the third party, but they're free to make their own minds up and make their own strategies together. They're certainly reciting some of the same talking points today that Liberal members across the way are, so as far as those things go, the coalition is alive and well.

I think that we should look at the way this unfolded. One of the reasons why I believe that we should vote

against this budget is because I no longer have confidence, and I believe the people of Cambridge no longer have confidence, in this government's ability to manage the economy, this government's ability to manage the finances of this province, especially when you have scandal after scandal costing billions upon billions of dollars, dollars that could go to a variety of different projects, could go to a variety of different services for people, could go to a variety of important things, like perhaps even reducing the debt in this province. There are many things we could use the money for, all of which are lost on the basis of a vote of confidence in this government, a complicit vote of confidence saying, "It's okay to mismanage our economy; it's okay to mismanage our finances."

We have a jobs and fiscal crisis in the province of Ontario that we haven't seen before. I don't think my constituents would support a scenario where, after crisis after crisis, this government continues to survive. Mr. Speaker, all people may not agree with me, but at least they'd have an opportunity to voice their opinion in an election. That's why I think that this government should not have the confidence of this Legislature, and we should decide as a whole community, what we should do.

I can't, as a member of this Legislature, divorce my role as an opposition MPP between holding the government accountable and getting results for people. Sometimes when you do something, you actually make things worse for the people of this province. You dig a hole deeper. You spend more money you don't have. The deficit projection for next year is higher than the deficit in the fiscal year that just ended. This is getting worse. It's not getting better. Yet we're selling this, potentially—or they're trying to sell this—as a benefit. I don't see the benefit there when you still have a jobs crisis where 600,000 men and women woke up this morning without a job. We have millions of people in the province of Ontario who wake up every morning going to their job, not knowing if, at the end of the week, they're going to still have their job.

These are the kinds of concerns that people started bringing forward to me during this constituency week. I attended a Catholic school board meeting on Tuesday this week as well, during constituency week, and heard the concerns of what they were talking about. Certainly, Catholic education and the future funding of Catholic education was of particular importance to them. But one of the things that we discussed in that meeting was the changes in the way third-party child care facilities at schools are funded based on the new capital expenses that school boards are facing with full-day kindergarten. Previously, these non-profit child care providers were able to leverage the school board to basically build the facilities that they could rent back at a later date. That program is no longer operating, potentially threatening new child care spaces in my city, in my community of Cambridge and the township of North Dumfries. These are some of the things that we're hearing on a daily basis that this budget does not address.

I met with my mayor during the week as well, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that he never holds back on sharing his opinion with anybody, and certainly, if you were to talk to him, I'm sure he would be as forthright with you as he was with me. He wonders why the province of Ontario does not live within its means, much like municipalities in this province; why we are allowed to run billion-dollar deficits—not just billion-dollar deficits, deficits to the tens of billions of dollars—without regard to balancing books. This frustrates a mayor of a municipality, of a medium-sized city in the province of Ontario, to a large degree. He has to make sure that the books are balanced at the end of the year. If he can't account for it, he knows he's going to face the flak of voters. He wonders why people in the province of Ontario and their government in the province of Ontario are not held to the same standard.

He then starts to talk about the things that the cancellation of the gas plants could buy, could purchase for our city. He notes three new hospital expansions, three new wings that could be used for our city. He also notes that we could buy a variety of things—get a GO line to the city of Cambridge, something that's very important to him and to myself. But we squandered money. This government has squandered money. We are trying to hold them accountable, so you can't divorce our accountability function with getting results, particularly if you think you can do a better job than they are doing today. If you think you can do a better job, let's just get on with the process of letting the people decide who should govern this province.

Mr. Speaker, 180 new recreation and community centres could be built with the cancellation costs of the gas plants, 90,000-plus students could have their college or university tuition paid for as a result of or on account of cancellation costs associated with the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, yet we spend \$900 million, \$1 billion—I know the number fluctuates because we still don't know from them exactly how much this thing is going to cost the people of Ontario. We could have done so many things with that money, but it has essentially been wasted to build not even one megawatt of power. That is something that certainly frightens the people of Cambridge, and they should be frightened, because it's their hard-earned tax dollars that are being squandered by a government that's more concerned about keeping themselves in office than concerned about the very people they seek to represent. And when that happens, when partisan interests are ahead of public interests, it's time to change government. I think that is true very much.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday of last week—a very busy day and lots of meetings in my constituency office and off-site—I arrived at my constituency office, after an off-site meeting, to a group of women who were standing in my office. I hadn't been expecting them. I didn't know that they wanted to see me. There were probably about six or eight of them. They were in my office and they were coming to talk to me about the budget.

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They showed up and they said, “We heard you were on your constituency week and we figured we'd find you at the constituency office.” Well, as luck would have it, I was there almost when they arrived, shortly after they arrived, but I was there nonetheless and I agreed to sit down with them to talk about what their concern might be. They started the conversation like this: “I've never done this before. I've never called my MPP. I've never visited my MPP's office. I didn't really know what to do.” Mr. Speaker, you never know how to handle when some group of people comes to your office and start the conversation with “I've never done this before. I've never visited my MPP.” You never know how that conversation is going to go.

This was a group of women who were recently laid off of their work. They were laid off because of the changes that are under way in our health care system, particularly with respect to physiotherapy services in our long-term-care facilities and our retirement homes. Now, this is something that I think is particularly serious. We have this group of women who are tasked with making sure that our seniors are healthy, that they're gaining strength, that they're continually moving, and that if they are trying to walk again or be mobile again, we have physiotherapists that are certainly working toward getting them the services they need and the exercises they require to get back on their feet or to become as mobile and as strong as possible.

Now, what they told me was very frightening. They suggested that—of course, they were upset they were not going to keep their job, but what was worse for them was the fact that they had to confront their clients, their customers and their patients with the reality that the services that they currently receive are services they're no longer going to be able to have past July 31. That's something they fear greatly. Seniors' health care in the province of Ontario, according to this group of women, is going to be seriously impacted by changes to the funding structures of physiotherapists in the province of Ontario.

Now, I was very shocked by this revelation. But what they told me next was, I think, even more shocking. What they told me next was that they believed that the government was not being forthright with seniors about the kinds of service cuts that are going to be incurred as a result of what has happened to this group of women. They've actually produced and provided me—I'm not going to share; I can share, if anyone wants to see—the itemization of myths versus facts that they've created as a result. I don't know—it was written in Word, so I'm not sure if it was done by this group of women or by a greater body of people who are more skilled at doing these things, but they provided a table essentially outlining and enumerating the myths and the facts associated with physiotherapy cuts in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I know that when it comes to seniors, they really rely on their health care. One of the things that they rely upon is to have those kinds of services that allow them to be mobile, that allow them to function in a

way that they are used to in many ways. Sadly, what this budget does, particularly with physiotherapist services, is it changes the kinds of services seniors are going to receive, and services that they require may no longer be there for them.

I find that quite troubling, in light of the fact that we sit here debating whether we should support a budget or not. We have a group of people—our seniors, the folks that have worked so hard to build this province—that are going to be seriously impacted by this devastating cut.

I struggle with the fact that this group of women believes that the people of Ontario are being misled by the program changes that are forthcoming.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this speaks to one of the overall reasons why this budget should not be supported: It's the very credibility of the government that is, and has been, called into question. It's that credibility that, obviously, every day in this Legislature and every day in our communities, we seek to try to hold this government accountable to, to be honest with the people of Ontario about what's truly transpiring here—not some PR stunt, not some flashy flyer or commercial or some smoke-screen or deflection tactic to hide from the real impact on people's lives. You're better to be forthright.

If you're going to make changes to programs, be honest about the impact of those changes. I think that's all people are asking for. If you are going to cut something, tell them that. Be honest with them. Don't just say, "Oh, it's going to be great. You're going to have all these sorts of things," when it's actually not going to happen at the end of the day.

The NDP can support this budget, as they are free to do, but they should do that knowing the full realm of consequences about doing that. To have confidence in this scandal-plagued government is something I simply don't share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm going to preface my remarks and my questions by saying that I have the utmost respect for the member from Cambridge and much of the work that he has done in this House, and I think he should be commended on it. But I disagree with some of the thrust of his arguments.

One of my biggest concerns, and one of the biggest questions that always comes to my mind—I'm always troubled with this, and I need to maybe spend some time and sit down with some Conservatives and talk to them about it—is that the last time I checked, and as far as I understand, cutting services and privatizing essential services, like services within health care, is something that the Conservatives want to do and will do and are hoping to do if they're in power. So while I commend the member from Cambridge for raising this issue about troubling—and concerns around the cuts to services when it comes to physiotherapists—I've also met with them—my understanding is that that's what this party wants to do. They want to cut more services. They want people to fend for themselves. They want people to have

a private health care system. That's what I thought, so I'm curious to hear what my friend has to say about that.

When it comes to credibility—I think that's one of the most important things we can do as parliamentarians and as people who represent people in our community. There's a lot of lost trust in government, and there's a lot of lost trust in politicians. I think one of the shining beacons of hope to restore that trust in government, to restore that trust in politicians, is what's happening federally in the parliamentary budget office and what we'd like to bring here in Ontario with a financial accountability office. That is a shining beacon of hope. The work that Kevin Page and that office have done federally to expose many of the incorrect or partial pictures that the federal government was trying to put forward in their budgets—the fact that they went to the Supreme Court to obtain documents, to expose the realities of the cuts and the costs and that this Conservative government readily would like you to believe that they're managing money so well when it turns out that they were mismanaging money immensely—this accountability office in Ontario, which was our idea as the NDP, will be a step forward in making our government more reliable and will hold it to account and is a step forward for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm here again, having the opportunity—and quite happy to do so—to provide some comments and some questions with respect to the member from Cambridge's discussion points, talking points, regurgitation of what we've kind of heard from that caucus pretty much since day one on this issue. I did listen closely, and I did pick up at one point in his remarks that there was a discussion around something with respect to this year's budget that he found shocking.

As I've said many times in this House since May 2, since the budget was tabled, this is a budget that helps move Ontario's economy forward. It means that we're going to make sure that we keep recovering, we keep building a stronger province, we keep creating jobs, we keep making sure that our province is prosperous and that we have the fair society that Ontarians in my riding of Vaughan, and Ontarians right across this province, definitely want to see.

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But what I find particularly shocking—because the official opposition talks a great deal both in question period and elsewhere about the importance of job creation—is that when members like the member from Cambridge stand in their place and complain and act shocked about things that they're hearing or seeing in the budget—what shocks me is that a member, like that member from Cambridge, would have taken the opportunity to vote against the creation of the southwest economic development fund. That's a program—a fund—that was created with respect to helping to create 25,000 jobs across southwestern Ontario, including in his community of Cambridge. I find it shocking that he

wouldn't see fit to supporting this budget and supporting our direction with respect to things like that particular economic development fund and a lot of the other things that are contained in the budget.

What the people of my community find shocking perhaps more than anything else is the decision, as I've said many times before, of people in that particular caucus—in the official opposition caucus—to sort of throw away their responsibility, to ignore their responsibility as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and to have decided weeks ago—*notwithstanding* what they're making it sound like in the House in the last couple of days or couple of weeks—to have decided weeks and weeks ago—

Interjection: Months.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: —months ago—that they didn't want to review the budget, didn't want to know what was in it. They simply decided, right away, months ago, that they were going to vote against it—unacceptable to the people of Vaughan and unacceptable to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise to speak to comments made by my colleague from Cambridge. It was interesting; he talked about a conversation with the mayor of his municipality. I was the mayor of South Glengarry, and in talking to the mayor back home, he talked about the same issues: about a government that doesn't want to live within its means, that collects a large amount of taxes but does not give money back to the rural municipalities. We've seen numbers that are less than what they were when this government took over, although their revenues are up drastically.

Their infrastructure program—we have the Kraft Road bridge that was in serious shape. They weren't even allowed to apply for it—the grant—because they were considered in too good of financial shape. We had a modest reserve at home that allowed us not to have to borrow money every year, that allowed us to save on interest. It allowed us to reinvest into projects like our Lancaster water project. It helped the people who had committed to it as well, and we're told that we're not allowed to apply for a major infrastructure program that they very much bragged about.

This goes to speak about the attitude of this government. The fact that, "Well, if you can borrow more money, go to the bank and borrow until you can't borrow anymore." The interest is not—make it a major line item.

You wonder why we said some time ago, "We can't support this government"? We can't support this government. We've seen the waste that this government's gone—they've got us into a mess. They've driven up our costs so high, our businesses are leaving. They talk about trying to get people working, but it comes down to being competitive. We are no longer competitive in this province.

How could anybody support this government? Just because you come out with a new budget—they do that

every year, but they've done that for nine years and we have nine years of waste and corruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that there are some things—some ideas and some feelings—that we may have in common with the PC Party. I certainly share the member from Cambridge's concern around physiotherapy. I think that we have different ideas, actually, on how to deal with the issue around how physiotherapy services are delivered. We would like to entrench and support those services through the health care system, whereas I think that they may lean towards more privatization of those services.

So there are fundamental differences, and you know what? That's okay, because that's the way democracy works. The other way democracy works is that the people who are elected to this House show up to work. You work on the budget. You bring the ideas forward. You listen to people around the province. You gather best practices, and you try to inform.

The most important job that we have in this Legislature is the confidence motion on the budget. The budget is, in many ways, a moral document which informs the priorities of this House and the priorities of the people of this province. I tell you, when I consulted with people in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo, they told me very clearly, when we indicated that we were willing to put our ideas forward and to support those ideas going forward, they felt relief, because they are afraid; there is a genuine fear factor about some of the ideas that are being brought forward by the PC Party. Those are the white papers or discussion papers, those ideas that people of that party have put forward.

We would rather be open, we would rather be transparent, which is what we did in informing the priorities in this budget. We can go back to the electorate and say, "We fought for that financial accountability office that will keep every future government accountable to the people who supported us and sent us here." That's an important step in securing support for this budget. It's a tangible result and we can take it back to the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Cambridge has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rob Leone: Speaker, I'm not sure two minutes is going to do justice to all of that, but I would like to thank the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, the member from Vaughan, the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and the member from Kitchener—Waterloo for contributing to the debate of the bill, and having questions and comments.

Again, I guess for the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, we're not saying privatization of services, so I'll answer your question very straight up, but I'll still have a coffee with you.

With respect to the economy, I think we've talked a lot about the economy. My problem is that the government simply hasn't listened.

I do want to share a little bit of a story, because I was at Bitmaker Labs today doing a tour—very close to

Queen's Park—just looking at how youth can get together to think about an innovative way to learn a skill, to get a skill and market that skill, and get a good job at the end of the day. Even though the government isn't listening to us, we continue to listen to the people and I think we're on the right side of the issues with respect to that.

At the insinuation from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo that we've checked out of the process—far from that. These white papers have been a very determined, methodical way of talking about policy in a way that that party simply doesn't want to—

Interjection: They don't have policy.

Mr. Rob Leone: They don't have policy. They say, "Well, let's spend some more money, let's tax some more people, let's drive this province further into the hole"—and they've found a partner who's willing to dance with them. It's the party right across the way here.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: This is the mimosa coalition, as my friend sitting across from me—not really right in front of me right now, but from Lanark, Lennox, Addington, Frontenac—I can't quite remember his riding name today.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this is about holding the government to account. I'm voting against this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the budget motion? I'm pleased to recognize the member for—Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Kenora—Rainy River.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Kenora—Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to today's budget motion.

I spent the last two months gathering feedback from my constituents using a variety of methods, including a budget survey that I sent out to all 28,000 homes in my riding. I've spoken to hundreds of people at trade shows, meetings and constituency appointments, as well as hearing from those who shared their thoughts with me through emails and letters. After all of this consultation, I believe allowing the budget to pass is the right decision.

Was it an easy choice to make? No, it was not. But I am confident that I am making the responsible decision.

That's what it really boils down to. Making the right decision is never easy. It takes work, it takes a willingness to listen to viewpoints that are different from your own and it takes time. I believe my caucus colleagues and I were absolutely right in taking our time and talking with people before we made a decision, because there's not one single member of my caucus who thinks that they know better than the people they represent.

That's a fundamental part of democracy that some individuals have lost sight of. We were not sent here to represent our own views or our caucus's views; we were sent here to speak on behalf of each and every constituent, regardless of whether they voted for us or not. We have an obligation to listen to each and every one of

those voices and do our best to arrive at a consensus that best represents their views.

We strongly believe that we are here to represent the people in our ridings and that we are not so arrogant as to believe that we know better than the people we represent. I think it's unfortunate that there are individuals in this Legislature who believe otherwise. In fact, I find it very disturbing that there is an entire caucus that has no interest in listening not only to their constituents but to anybody in this province, and that they are so arrogant about their "we know better" approach that they even put it in black and white.

1700

Just over a month and a half ago, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs held pre-budget consultations. After a strong fight, the people living in the northwest were able to share their thoughts on the upcoming budget, including what should be in it and what shouldn't be in it.

We heard feedback from groups like Hoshizaki House, in Dryden; First Step Women's Shelter, in Thunder Bay; the municipality of Ignace, the municipality of Pickle Lake, the Experimental Lakes support group, and Shoal Lake No. 39 First Nation—and that's mostly just from my riding.

The pre-budget hearing process gave us feedback from people, groups and organizations in this province who wanted input on the direction this government is taking. I believe very strongly that these groups and organizations have this right, because this government isn't the NDP government, it's not the Conservatives' government and it's not the Liberals' government. It's the people's government.

Each and every time we have an election, MPPs from each riding are sent here to represent their ridings and govern in the interests of the people. We in the opposition have an obligation to ensure that the government does not stray from this task. It's pretty cut and dried. So when the people of this province take the time to provide feedback, I believe we should listen, and I know that my caucus colleagues share this opinion.

Unfortunately, that view—that we're here to represent the people who elected us—isn't shared by the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus. Not only do they believe that they know better; they took time to put it in writing. That took the form of the dissenting opinion in the report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and I'd like to take a moment to share a few quotes.

This is what the Progressive Conservative caucus wrote in response to the submissions that the people brought forward: "Ontario simply has no money to continue funding everything. These are representative of our sincere belief that our approach, not that of these unrealistic requests"—again, referring to the presentations that people made—"would better inform the process ... we have formed recommendations to respond on an array of issues. Our party has a comprehensive and concrete plan to create jobs, control spending and get our

economy back on track. That should inform the budget process—not unworthy public relations initiatives by the Liberal Party.”

That is shameful. There we have it in black and white, straight from the PC caucus: “Don’t share your thoughts, because we know better than you.”

Despite having 12 sections to supplement that statement, including one on rural Ontario, they can’t be bothered to cobble together a plan for northern Ontario. They’re telling us that they have a comprehensive plan, but their plan does not even include northern Ontario, and that’s because they know better.

It’s shameful that they hold this view, because I believe that the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre in Ignace needs a new facility and rent certainty from this government. I believe that women’s shelters in our region need support to combat crumbling infrastructure.

I believe that northwestern Ontario municipalities need support from this government for vital infrastructure that will allow them to attract economic opportunities to create jobs for people in northwestern Ontario. I believe that we need an east-west road corridor to the Ring of Fire, to help communities in the northwest to maximize the benefits of our natural resources.

I believe this government needs to enter into a respectful dialogue with First Nations to ensure that projects such as the twinning of Highway 17 near Kenora move forward without unnecessary delays. And I believe the government should intervene—fortunately, it has taken some steps, after the hearings—to save the Experimental Lakes Area in my riding.

Unfortunately, the Progressive Conservatives do not support these initiatives.

Speaker, this isn’t an isolated incident. Last year, when the PCs brought forward a bill to repeal the Far North Act, they mentioned how groups like the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, known as NAN, and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, known as NOMA, were opposed to the original act. They even went so far as to read parts of letters from these organizations that said as much. Unfortunately, rather than read the whole letter, the member who brought forward this bill ignored paragraphs that clearly stated that these organizations were opposed to scrapping the bill altogether without first creating a replacement. But once again, who cares what the people think, because the PCs know better.

They say they know better and, unfortunately, we’re left in the dark as to what they really want, because rather than be part of the process, they said, “We’re not the government, so we’re going home” for both minority budgets. Rather than respecting the wishes of the voters of this province and working together in a minority situation, they chose to sit this one out and instead accomplish nothing—absolutely nothing.

I can tell you from that same feedback that I heard from Conservatives living across the northwest that they are furious that members of the Progressive Conservative caucus rejected the budget months before it was even

written—again, for a second time—and that is not responsible.

There’s a very powerful and meaningful quote that came from the 2011 federal leaders’ debate, and I think it’s very relevant to the situation we’re having in Ontario right now. That’s when the late Jack Layton asked Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff how he expected to get a promotion to Prime Minister if he didn’t show up for work. I think that same question could be asked of the official opposition right now. We were sent here to do a job and, instead, they have been pouting for over a year and a half.

I’ve spent a lot of time focusing on what’s not responsible. I’d like, if I could, to shift focus to speak about what is responsible. Being responsible is living up to your obligations. It’s about making a commitment to do the right thing. As I said earlier in this speech, it’s not always easy. It involves hard work, compromise and a willingness to work with people whom you may not necessarily agree with all the time, and that’s what we’ve been doing with this budget. We’ve been compromising.

We knew going in that we would not come out with an NDP budget. We were under no illusions that we were going to get everything we wanted, but we resolved to work in the best interests of the hard-working people of this province and roll up our sleeves and enter into a constructive and meaningful dialogue with the government.

You see, Speaker, leadership isn’t dictating to people what you’re going to do. Leadership is working with others to accomplish goals, expressing a willingness to make difficult decisions and having a desire to effect positive change without worrying about who’s going to take credit or get the accolades. Leadership is understanding that it’s getting results that matter, and what the Progressive Conservatives wouldn’t do, the NDP did do. That’s because we have respect for the voters who sent us here.

We rolled up our sleeves, and after listening to people from across this province, we came up with five reasonable requests for the budget. This included a five-day home care guarantee; a 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums; a First Start jobs program that’ll help young people enter the workforce and stay there; steps that would allow people on social assistance to keep a small amount of their employment earnings that would help them to escape the cycle of dependency that our system creates; and closing unnecessary corporate tax loopholes to make it easier for the province to balance its budget. Three of these—home care, auto insurance and youth jobs—are important northern priorities.

Since I participated in the debate on the budget just over two weeks ago, I’m not going to rehash all of the statistics that came out of the more than 28,000 budget surveys I sent out, but I will reiterate that more than 90% of the respondents indicated a high to very high support of reduced auto insurance premiums, while there was also very high support for increased access to home care, closing tax loopholes and youth jobs.

While it is disappointing the government wasn't too interested in closing corporate tax loopholes, such as the ability to write off luxury boxes for sporting events and expensive dinners, they did meet us halfway on a number of these priorities, including committing to home care which will, in turn, also reduce costs and enhance health care services.

In fact, on May 10, I participated in the RNAO's Take Your MPP to Work day in Sioux Lookout where I spent a great deal of time learning exactly how our push to improve access to home care will improve service and reduce costs at their hospital, the Meno Ya Win hospital.

During that visit it was pointed out that at any given time one third to one half of the patients who are admitted to the hospital are not there because they need to be in the hospital, but because the waiting lists for other services, such as long-term care and home care, are so long that they cannot be discharged. Instead of being able to receive treatment in the comfort of their homes or being transferred to a long-term-care facility that's better suited to their needs and more cost-efficient, these patients are costing the system \$2,000 per day because the correct investments have not been made.

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In fact, I met one gentlemen who had been in the hospital since October because the home care services he needs in the Sioux Lookout area are not presently available. Since October, his stay in the hospital has cost the health care system \$2,000 a day because small, front-line investments weren't made. What's worse is that while receiving the treatment that home care could have provided, he developed a highly contagious infection, which meant that he has been living in virtual isolation since that time.

Home care is a huge issue in the north, with people relying on emergency rooms, being admitted to the hospital or being denied service altogether because the waiting list is up to six months in my region. That is just not acceptable. While this government has stopped short of making the five-day guarantee that we had requested, I can assure those of you who are watching and those of you on the government side that we will be on you each and every day to make sure that the investment pays off and that the people who live not only in the north but all across Ontario are receiving the care they deserve.

But approving this budget isn't only about the commitments that we have received from the government. It's about delivering results and ensuring that those results are done in a timely and cost-effective manner. That's why we asked this government to create a financial accountability office, which will review government spending proposals before the money is spent. This is basically the creation of a taxpayer watchdog to ensure that not only are the results people expect delivered, but that they're done so in a responsible, cost-effective manner.

This new office will safeguard taxpayer dollars from future scandals such as Ornge and eHealth. It will ensure that monies budgeted will be spent effectively. For

instance, with home care the NDP believes the results that we need, the five-day home care guarantee, can be accomplished with a \$30-million investment, not the Liberals' proposed \$260-million investment that comes without a service guarantee. Once in place, this new office will ensure that only the money that is required is invested, no more. I think that will help to determine whether we actually need the \$30 million or if we need the \$260 million. It's about more value for the money.

The new financial accountability office will ensure that not only will the problem go away, but that the extra cash is caught in a safety net to be there for other priorities and projects.

As many say, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. That really is the situation that we've been faced with in Ontario. One government comes into power, wastes a bunch of money, gets caught in a scandal, and so we replace it with another one that promises that it won't do the same thing. They won't do the thing that the other guy did, and then it turns around and it does the same thing. It sort of reminds me of the old Tommy Douglas story of Mouseland: The electorate throws them out and the cycle repeats itself again. What we're saying right now is instead of repeating the cycle, let's fix the problem. Let's bring someone in who can plug the leak before the dam breaks, and that's the financial accountability office.

We need this oversight in Ontario now. We need it because far too often we have parties in governments that propose things that sound great, such as the legislated wage freezes that the party to my right keeps touting, but which end up costing taxpayers tens of millions or even hundreds of millions of dollars more, essentially throwing money out of the window because it makes them look good or it's a good sound bite.

By approving this office, we're giving the taxpayers of this province the extra oversight, a voice that can say, "Wait a minute, what about British Columbia? What about this situation or that situation where the wage freezes cost taxpayers more?" That's what we need.

I think it's shameful that my Progressive Conservative colleagues do not support the financial safeguards, and I can't seem to figure out why. They claim to want to save taxpayers money, so why not do something that actually accomplishes that end? Because as Tommy Douglas stated, rather than going from the black cats to the white cats and then back again, why not actually do something about the problem? Why not create a system of accountability that will be there for this government and the next government and the one after that? It seems reasonable.

Instead of saying, "We don't like the government, so we're going to take our ball and we're going to go home," why not say, "While we may not agree with the voters' choice, we respect their decision, and now it's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work"? Because there's so much more to worry about in this province than passing the budget. The pressing issue isn't who's sitting in the Premier's chair; it's what we can do as a

collective group of elected officials and individuals to create jobs, to help seniors, to help families and to move this province forward. It's about working with the person beside you, the member across from you and each and every member who you need to work with to deliver results.

Two weeks ago, when this House last sat, I raised an issue about a mining company that was having approval for its environmental assessment terms of reference unnecessarily delayed. After I asked the question in question period, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines came up and said, "We need to work together on this issue," and by working together, that approval was granted within two hours.

For months, I've been talking with the Minister of Infrastructure to resolve a situation facing the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre. This issue is pressing, and it needs to be resolved. Throwing \$100 million out the window for an election just to come back with the same result is not fixing the problem; it's irresponsible. The responsible thing to do is to continue to work, continue to fight and continue to respect the people who sent us here to do a job, a very important job.

I am committed to the people who sent me here and to doing this job to the very best of my ability. I hope that all of you, everyone in this House, will join me in putting the best interests of our constituents first.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Kenora-Rainy River and thank her for her comments on what we need to be doing here in this House, because, absolutely, we need to be thinking about how we work together. Where are areas where we can find consensus? Because I too find that when I talk to people in my riding of Guelph, they share the same point of view: that we don't need to have an election, that a government has been elected and that all of us have been elected. Their expectation is that we will find a way to work together and to make this Legislature work.

I just wanted to comment on—the member mentioned that she'd been participating in the RNAO Take Your MPP to Work day, and I did the same thing. It fit in with the theme of home and community care. I do want to point out that sometimes community care is a little bit bigger than just specifically home care, but one of the things that we're doing in the budget is committing an additional \$260 million to home and community care.

I was able to visit the diabetes clinic in Guelph, which in Guelph is actually run by the family health team. The family health team has done a wonderful job of integrating a whole lot of different services into that community service; in fact, the diabetes clinic there includes exercise facilities, dietitians and social workers, along with the nursing services and the doctor that you would expect. It's a great example of when we have everybody co-operating and delivering a great community service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise to comment on the member from Kenora-Rainy River. I was somewhat surprised that she was commenting that we were a party without a plan. I think that we've done a very good job of developing our white papers. They're on the websites; maybe they should do a little more listening and watching themselves and find these plans. We have something around 10 plans that cover most of the items, and we have more to come out. Certainly we've put a plan forth, and we're doing some of the things that will bring this province back and make it competitive again.

They're talking about how we refused to support this budget. Damn right; we can't support this budget. You're talking about a government that's gone back and wasted \$1 billion on gas plants, \$1 billion on Ornge helicopters, \$1 billion on the Green Energy Act, \$2 billion on eHealth, and now they've wasted \$1 billion buying NDP support.

1720

We hear today that they're looking for almost \$500 from every household in this province to pay for transit in Toronto. I mean, when is enough enough? They believe that if they get an accountability officer who will be trained to catch these people wasting money, that will solve all the problems. If you're so worried about waste on the other side that you have to get another ministry that's going to spend millions looking at this government, it's time they listen to the people in my riding. They're saying they're fed up with the government. Enough is enough. They've seen the corruption. They see the results of this party—where it has taken us. We're almost bankrupt. It's time to get rid of the rascals on the other side and time to go to an election. At over a million dollars an hour, just in borrowing, we've borrowed all we can borrow. The banks are telling us so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, first of all I'd like to compliment the member from Kenora-Rainy River. A new, young member, she was very in-depth and did a lot of research, which some other people might want to do more of.

You know, I sit here and listen to the official opposition go after the government on their scandals. Yes, the scandals happened. Yes, they made a big mistake. Finally, they admitted it. We finally got an apology on The Agenda, Steve Paikin's show. We did get an apology.

Now, to make a long story short, if you were to listen to this party, with all due respect, they want a right-to-work state where everyone can work for nine bucks an hour. They want to change the apprentice ratio so that the poor craftsmen and tradesmen have to watch more apprentices and can't keep them safe. They want to do that. They want to raise corporate breaks, so that the working guy will have to bear the brunt of that. There are all kinds of things they want to do.

You know, they call this new thing the white paper. I've got a different name for it. It's not "white," and I'll

leave up to your imagination what I would like to call it. It's two-ply—maybe three-ply. All I can say is that if these guys get in, we'll all be working for \$9 an hour. Unemployment will go up.

It's just absolutely unconscionable that they cannot read a budget, they won't read the budget and they say no to everything. They never say yea to anything. The bottom line here is that you've got a party that just says no. They don't read it, they won't do anything about it and if you expect any better—if you went to that group and expected better, believe me, we'll all be in bigger trouble.

The bottom line is that we in the NDP do our research; you might want to do yours.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The minister of corrections and francophone affairs.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend the member from Kenora–Rainy River for her presentation. She did her work. She consulted with her residents and got their input. I want to congratulate her.

I know that your neighbours on your right don't need to read or consult, because even prior to the discussion on the budget, they already told us they want an election. They don't want to read the budget, give their opinion on the budget or give their input on the budget. They want an election. We know why they want an election.

One more reason why I'm going to support this budget is because of the physiotherapy transformation that will go on, starting in August. Ontario will provide more than 200,000 additional seniors and patients with improved access to high-quality physiotherapy, exercise and fall-prevention classes. I'm very concerned about the publicity that is being provided by those organizations that used to have control of physiotherapy clinics in Ontario. The minister has added more money into the budget. If the budget is approved, more seniors will receive physiotherapy services on a timely basis and where they should receive them—not only those who receive services at these DPC clinics. Four organizations have control in Ontario. This is going to end, and the distribution of services will be more equitable in Ontario. More seniors will be served.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kenora–Rainy River has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'd like to thank the Minister of Education, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for their comments.

I just wanted to clarify a statement that was made by the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who said that I said that the PCs don't have a plan. I didn't say the PCs don't have a plan—

Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: No, no, no. What I said was that when it comes to their very comprehensive version of the budget that they would put forward, it says nothing

about northern Ontario; that despite all of their bluster about caring about the development of the Ring of Fire and the high cost of hydro prices for residential users in northern Ontario, when the rubber hits the road, like I said, there are 12 sections in here that cover absolutely everything under the sun, including rural Ontario, but there's nothing about northern Ontario. That is shameful.

The other thing I also said is that there's something that is profoundly disrespectful and frankly, quite anti-democratic, about saying quite literally that we should just listen to what they have to say because they know best and we shouldn't engage in these unworthy political relations initiatives like pre-budget consultations. That is shameful. That is so disrespectful for everybody who has supported them to say, "We only care about you when it comes to election time. Your views and values aren't important to us between such times." I was hoping that when we were elected to a minority government it would cause people to maybe leave aside the partisanship and work together, talk about some ideas and where we can go, and that just isn't happening with this party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the budget motion?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Oakville.

I'm happy to speak to the budget motion today, a bill that has laid the groundwork for a prosperous and fair Ontario. This budget successfully addresses issues and strengthens services that matter most to all Ontarians. At the same time, it enables Ontario's economy to be more productive and competitive through a six-point economic action plan. It's an action plan that seeks to invest more than \$35 billion over the next three years in modern infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, roads and public transit. Accessible and efficient public transit is an important priority for my riding of Ottawa–Orléans, and it is critical that municipalities have all the support they require when it comes to building public transit.

We in Orléans would certainly like to see the light rail transit come out to Trim Road. By permanently dedicating two cents per litre of gas tax each year to municipalities, our government has shown that it will help build public transit. This means improved access to services, education and employment opportunities. It means cutting gridlock, which costs the economy \$6 billion a year in lost wages. It means job creation and improved household income. It also means reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which is an environmental necessity, especially for the future generations of Ontarians.

Our government also wants to ensure a highly skilled workforce, something that can only be achieved by investing in skills and education, and by implementing a forward-looking strategy for youth employment. That's why our government will be investing \$295 million in a two-year Youth Job Strategy that would promote youth employment and training opportunities as well as entrepreneurship and innovation. This investment would especially help strengthen the role that industry-specific training institutions can play in generating youth employ-

ment. This means that places like La Cité collégiale, Centre de métiers Minto in Orléans could even better prepare youth for careers in trades, engineering and technology.

Just as we have to invest in the future generations of Ontarians, we must also invest in those who have brought us to where we are today: our seniors. Increased investment in home and community care—a total increase of more than \$700 million by 2015-16—will increase options available to seniors to help them stay longer in the comfort of their own homes. Launching Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors would also further provide better access to health care, quality resources and improved safety and security for seniors.

1730

My staff and I have received overwhelming positive feedback on this proposed budget from our community in Orléans. This budget will support the well-being of my community, the poster child for linguistic minority communities in Canada, with 35,000 francophones living together with 75,000 anglophones and other minority groups in harmony, supporting each other and building a great community.

Le budget de 2013 dévoilé par notre gouvernement est un plan d'action positif pour l'Ontario. La stratégie de notre gouvernement est basée, entre autres, sur l'emploi et la croissance, une société équitable, un gouvernement responsable et garant des deniers publics, et l'atteinte de l'équilibre budgétaire.

Il est impératif de s'assurer de protéger les différentes collectivités de notre province et de l'ensemble de notre pays. Notre pays s'est d'ailleurs doté de lois afin de protéger les diverses collectivités qui le composent. En tant que représentant, mais surtout en tant que résident de la merveilleuse communauté d'Ottawa-Orléans, je partage cette responsabilité de protéger ma communauté que je respecte et aime profondément.

C'est précisément pour cette raison que j'ai posé un geste positif afin de soulever cette situation pressante et j'ai déposé, le 8 avril dernier, une plainte officielle au commissaire aux langues officielles du Canada, M. Graham Fraser. Il ne fait aucun doute que la région d'Orléans est une tête d'affiche des collectivités bilingues au Canada. Des francophones et anglophones y travaillent ensemble pour construire une communauté forte où le respect d'autrui et l'harmonie règnent.

La Loi sur les langues officielles est claire. Le gouvernement fédéral «s'est engagé à favoriser l'épanouissement des minorités francophones et anglophones, au titre de leur appartenance aux deux collectivités de langue officielle, et à appuyer leur développement et à promouvoir la pleine reconnaissance et l'usage du français et de l'anglais dans la société canadienne». Toute action contraire constitue une violation de la loi.

Les recherches sont claires : les francophones qui ne vivent pas à l'intérieur d'une forte communauté française font rapidement face à l'assimilation. Si le gouvernement du Canada, par son action de déplacer 10 000 emplois du

secteur public du centre-ville vers l'extrémité ouest, entrave sa responsabilité de protéger les communautés vivant en situation linguistique minoritaire, il incombe à d'autres de le décrier et de contester la constitutionnalité de ces décisions. C'est exactement ce que j'ai fait en déposant une plainte.

We had a great budget breakfast in Orléans, and we had over 20 people who came out. We had general agreement with the improvements we were making in education, in health care and in job creation. The job creation one is very important.

As we discussed that, one of the questions came out—because we do have a large First Nation population in Vanier, probably the largest Inuit population outside of their homeland. One of the things I wanted to read from the budget is, “Ontario is committed to ensuring all students have the same opportunities. The government will continue to invest in projects that help close the student achievement gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students, including support for the implementation of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education policy framework. The government will provide an additional \$5 million per year to improve student achievement for aboriginal students.”

That is an important part. That is something we don't mention in the budget very much, but it's extremely important that we do have that fairness across our great province and that we bring the First Nations into it in a better way.

Much like we need to work together in my community, in our communities in Orléans, we as elected members must also work together for all of our communities across the province. That's why we need to support this budget. The prosperity and future of our province, of Ontarians of today and tomorrow, depend on our ability to get things done. Let's do the right thing. Let's work together and support this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to follow the member from Ottawa-Orléans. Let me say from the outset that obviously, as a member of the government, I'll be supporting this budget.

I've heard a lot of comments on the conduct of either party—the third party and the opposition party. Quite frankly, I'm not overly upset that the official opposition has chosen to take the tack that it has; it has every right to do that. I think that the voters, the people of Ontario, will form their own opinions as to whether it was the correct way to approach this or not.

I much, however, personally prefer the approach that has been taken by the third party. Obviously we have disagreements; we're separate political parties. We're expected to not agree on things. We're expected to bring forward our best ideas, and people will judge us based on those ideas. I do have to compliment—I think it was a strategic choice. I think that, politically, it was a very smart strategic choice on the part of the third party to

take the approach they've taken. I think they brought forward some good ideas. They've seen them integrated into the budget. Certainly, for two of the parties—for the government and for the third party—I see this as a process that has led to a positive outcome for both of those parties.

The official opposition has chosen, before even seeing the budget, to go down the road of, “We’re not supporting it.” That, certainly, is a right, and I would not argue with that right one bit. I come from a riding where, generally, a Liberal or a Conservative is elected. The NDP usually runs fantastic candidates, but they usually run third. This is the puzzling part. In a riding like Oakville, which is very similar to some of the ridings that I know exist in the official opposition—and perhaps even yours, Speaker—people are always around the centre. Sometimes they’re a little bit to the right, sometimes a little bit to the left. I have a sense that they would much rather see the government working with the official opposition on a budget than the government working with the NDP on a budget. It’s a personal opinion; it relates to my specific riding. But I think that’s true of a lot of ridings as well, that they would much rather see us working on it as opposed to just, “We’re not supporting it.” That seems to me to be the wrong approach.

What we’ve been able to do, for example—we’re going to be able to proceed with a number of projects. What was really exciting news in the town of Oakville recently was that the GO trains, which have run in and out of Oakville at least since the 1970s, have now gone to a 30-minute all-day schedule. That’s starting to approach the times that you get from a subway system, where you can show up at the station and chances are that there’s going to be a train there shortly—unless the train left 30 seconds ago, in which case you’ve got 29 minutes to wait. If you’re a little late, if you’re stuck in traffic, if it’s bad weather or any of those things, you know that you can show up at the Bronte GO station or you can show up at the Oakville GO station—some people in Oakville even use the Clarkson GO station—and a train will be coming along to bring you downtown, and it runs every 30 minutes.

A lot of people complained about the evening schedule of the GO train; certainly, I find it difficult from time to time, because if you weren’t on the train by 6:30 or 6:45, you were waiting another hour between trains. That could get you home pretty late, and you started to think, “Perhaps the drive home, as rotten as it is, isn’t such a bad thing.” Those are the sorts of improvements that we’re likely to see as a result of the passage of this budget. The service is being implemented on June 29, as I understand it, but it’s the sort of thing that’s included in it.

I know, coming from the town of Oakville and from a municipal perspective, having spent 18 years on local and regional council, that one of the things that has really helped in the funding of municipal services has been the implementation of a gas tax that was dedicated to municipalities. It was always up in the air as to whether

that would continue; with the economic downturn in 2008-09, I think there were a lot of programs that were up in the air. I like how we’ve managed this, because now we’re able to make that gas tax permanent so people like Mayor Burton and people like the members of council in the town of Oakville now can rely on that funding on an ongoing basis, on a regular basis.

1740

I really like the idea of the budgetary officer of the House that the NDP brought forward—something I’m very supportive of, something that I would have thought that at this level of government we would have had in place some time ago. So the fact that it came from an opposition party and is being implemented, being included in a government budget that’s being supported by the third party, I think speaks to the seriousness that people take accountability on this in this House—on both sides of the House as well.

I spend a lot of time working with people at Community Living, talking to a lot of people in my community who rely on ODSP for their funding. A lot of those people have found the ability and the opportunity to secure employment. The old system, as much as it was better than previous systems, still penalized those people when they were working. They would work, they would show some initiative, they would get the dignity of work and then the government would take some of that money back, and that seemed to me to be really counterintuitive to the whole idea of trying to advance the notion that everybody in an inclusive society has a role to play. I think it speaks volumes in this budget that we’re able to increase the amount of money that people who are receiving ODSP are able to keep as a result of a part-time job or whatever type of job they have.

I’m also very, very pleased to see the continued funding of mental health services in my community. I think all over the province of Ontario people have been trying to get the government’s attention on this very, very important issue. As a result of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions that had excellent participation from all three parties, we were able, as a committee, to come together, prepare what I thought was a good report, bring it to the government’s attention and the government said, “Obviously we can’t deal with this report in one year”—no level of government could and no party could—but what we can do is bring in the youth part of that. We can bring in a mental health strategy that looks specifically at young people.”

I can only tell you that in the region of Halton, and I’m assuming throughout the province of Ontario and certainly in my riding of Oakville, that has been a tremendous success. We’ve integrated and implemented programs, primarily through the school system, that speak to what young people have been dealing with for some time and often didn’t have the ability to explain themselves or didn’t have the wherewithal to go to somebody and say, “I think I need some help here.” Even if they did go to their parents, often their parents didn’t know where to turn for help. That was clear in the report.

So the youth mental health strategy that's been implemented in the province of Ontario has paid dividends.

We've got a public school system that will continue to be funded as a result of the passage of this budget. When I came to this place in 2003, having run once in 1999, kids were dropping out of the public education system. Test scores were down. Kids just weren't graduating. I think we had about a 60% graduation rate—62%, 63% maybe. We've built that up over the years by continued investments through good times and bad times. We've invested in that system so that now it ranks as the best school system in the English-speaking world. That's something we should be especially proud of. Our graduation rates are up. Our test scores are way up, and obviously when graduation rates go up, it stands to reason that dropout rates go way down.

Last week, I was able to talk to a number of mayors in rural Ontario. I was just speaking to them about some of the projects they'd applied for through the MIII funding for some very, very much-needed infrastructure in some of the rural communities in the province of Ontario. I was able to have a brief conversation with these people about how things were going in general, what they were going to do with this money when they received it and which project they were working on. To a person, they were very pleased with the way we're approaching this. Certainly you could just tell by the tone of their voice—I was meeting with them on the phone—that this is something that was very, very important to their community and something they'd like to see continued. That is the sort of thing that is going to continue as a result of the passage of this budget.

As I said at the start, Speaker, I'm not opposed to the official opposition doing what it's doing. But it certainly seems to me that there could be a more positive effect to having participated in a budget process and trying to get some of those things included in the budget, as the NDP was able to get things that they thought were very important included in the budget.

I know all about party discipline, but I also know some of the people on that side of the House in the official opposition, Speaker. I suspect that some of them, if they had had their druthers, would have preferred to have taken a more co-operative and participatory route in this budget process.

I'm not trying to stimulate a revolt within the PC caucus. I'm saying that the people in the province of Ontario sent us down here in a minority government. They said to the Liberal Party, basically, "We're not giving you as many seats as you had before." To the Conservative Party, they said, "We're giving you more, but we don't want to make you the government." To the NDP, they actually said, "We're giving you some more seats." But the anticipation was that somehow we would take the wisdom of the province of Ontario and we would make that work; that somehow we'd pull that all together, we'd all sit down around a table, we'd hash it out, and we'd bring forward a budget that we thought reflected the wishes of the people in the province of

Ontario. That, unfortunately, isn't happening this time, and I think that's a shame.

If two parties in the House support the budget, obviously, that budget is going to pass—some changes along the way, perhaps, some amendments, some tweaks, to make it even better. I think it speaks to the democratic process we have, in that at least two parties have found some common ground here. As a government, to survive, we needed the support of either one of the parties, preferably of both parties.

Probably, looking at opinion polls and other signs and indicators that were out there, as much as it was the right thing to do, I think that strategically and politically, the decision that was made by the third party had a little bit of self-interest in it. That's fine; there's nothing wrong with that. We each stand up for our own parties the way we stand up for our constituents.

As much as I would have preferred to see this go down a different road, it appears that we have a budget before us that's fair and balanced. It has got some strong fundamentals underpinning it, and is worthy of the support, I think, of all parties in this House. As it stands today, Speaker, it looks like it's going to get the support of the government, obviously, and it looks like at this point in time, certainly, it's going to get the support of the third party, and I thank them for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to the colleagues from Ottawa-Orléans and Oakville.

One of the things I wanted to start off with here today is, we've heard a lot of things and a lot of rhetoric. People continue to espouse that I have not read the budget. Well, unless they've sat beside me for every day that we're in this Legislature—and when I'm not in the Legislature—to know what I'm doing, I think it's very disingenuous and in fact disrespectful for them to use these talking points.

They keep talking rhetoric about "we want to work together," and "we want to make a difference." How can you say those types of things and expect people to truly believe that you're sincere with what you're believing?

Each of our members in our PC caucus makes their own decisions based on their principles and on what they believe is right and what is wrong. What we do not do is sit on our hands and let a government that is corrupt and going down the wrong path have another year. What we do not do is call them corrupt in the morning, and then make deals in backrooms that are going to look good in the public media, and then prop them up and give them life again. You can't call someone corrupt and say they're horrible and they're doing the wrong things for this province, and, on the very same day, stand in the afternoon and vote with them, which they have done in this House on things like the wind turbine issue, that we've had in this House four times. They propped them up and supported them.

You either think a government is credible or you don't. We do not believe the Liberal government, after

the last nine years, is running this province the way they should. We believe there's a ton of waste and things that we are not getting, as a result of their lack of management, or mismanagement.

We have health care that could be better. We have education that could be better. We have infrastructure that could be better. Propping them up and giving them more life, when they continue down the same path of overspending and waste, would be disrespectful to me, to my taxpayers and, most importantly, to my sons, Zach and Ben. That's the reason why I'm here: so that they have a future to look forward to, and those pages in front of you have a future to look forward to, Speaker.

We will not support when we see a government continue to overspend and not live within their means. We will not support a government that does not have a jobs plan and some accountability built in, to make sure they achieve those goals. We will not support a government that continues to run up a deficit so that those kids who are sitting in front of you will never have a future to look forward to. I will not support this budget, based on my principles.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Listening to the Conservatives and the Liberals, we seem to lose sight—and I've said this again: This is a minority government. The mandate of a minority government is that all parties work together to get results for the people of Ontario—not for the Conservative Party, not for the Liberal Party, but for the people of Ontario. That's what we're doing when we stand up here and we speak about the debate: We're giving our ideas to make life better for the people of Ontario and to make sure that their voices are heard.

Every person in this Legislature has a responsibility to come back to this Legislature and speak on behalf of their constituents. What I have heard—and it's not rhetoric; it's what I've heard—is my constituents have said, "You know, Teresa, I'm glad that you have worked hard for us. We didn't want an election. We know this government needs to be held responsible for their actions, and the financial accountability officer is a measure that is something we're happy with, and we can live with that. We didn't want an election." I've heard people say, "We don't want another election. It's costly. We want parties to work together. That's how we voted less than two years ago." So we need to respect those results.

We need to respect our constituents and take the time to look at legislation, give thoughtful debate and make up our minds in the end and not just sit there—the member from Kenora–Rainy River actually put it very nicely—pout in the corner, cross your arms and pout and say, "I don't like the rules to the game, so I'm not going to play."

In the Legislative Assembly, this is the rules to the game. We're in a minority government. The people of Ontario set the rules for you, and they've told you, "Get results for us."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's a pleasure to stand to respond to the comments made by the members from Oakville, Ottawa–Orléans—in response, I have to echo what was just said by the member from London–Fanshawe in terms of what I'm hearing in my community as well, and that is that people expect us to work together. People want us to govern. This is a minority government. We are to work together. It's unfortunate that the opposition has refused to do so through this period of time. Though the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound indicates that he's voting on this budget based on his principles, I think we need to point out that they had already decided not to support the budget before it was even written. So I'm not quite sure how that was based on principles when they didn't know what was going to come out.

However, notwithstanding that, what am I hearing in my community? I'm hearing, "Has that budget been passed yet? Can we just get on to govern with the other elements that we need to move forward with?" Why are they saying that? They're saying that because they recognize that this budget has a balanced focus. Yes, we're focusing on ensuring that Ontario remains a prosperous province, but we're also looking at the other side to ensure that we have a fair society.

So we have investments in our communities. We have investments in home care, children's treatment centres, transformation of social assistance on the one side. But on the other side, we also have a venture capital fund, increases to our research funds. We have a very competitive tax regime here in Ontario, an accelerated capital cost allowance.

Interjection.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I know the member opposite doesn't like hearing all the good things that are in the budget, but it is a budget that has received support from across the area in my riding and in my region as well. You know why? Because it reflects the priorities. It reflects priorities that I hear in my office of our communities, our families, our children. When we do that, when we support our—when our constituents succeed, our communities succeed and our province succeeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and/or comment.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Oakville made mention of ODSP, and they are allowed to keep a bit more of their own money that they're earning, and that's a good thing. I'm disappointed the asset limits have been raised for those on Ontario Works but they weren't raised for those who are on disability. I think that's unfortunate.

There is no question that this government has to realize it has to focus on core services—core services like children's aid, for example; core services like the Disability Support Program—services very important to taxpayers but obviously to the people who need those services themselves. To do that, you can still run a leaner type of government. You can do more with less. You can reduce spending. You have to do it appropriately—a little less heavy-handed than what we have been seeing with what's being done with our children's aid societies.

You have to cut spending. You can't just slow it down if you're going to be serious about dealing with the debt that you have created.

We all want to protect these kinds of things that we care about, like ODSP and children's aid. At the same time, we must reduce the size, the cost and the role of government. Anyone who tells you they can eliminate a \$11-billion deficit, let alone a projected \$411.4-billion debt, without reducing spending, in my view, is either naive or they think that you are naive.

The member from Oakville paid a visit to Simcoe a number of years ago for the opening of the Toyotetsu parts plant down there. I think you were PA for economic development. We really appreciated you coming down. Members of this party don't come down to my riding. We appreciate you coming down.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You got a shovel?

We could learn a lot from companies like Toyotetsu. The government can learn a lot on how they run their business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Oakville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to respond to the comments from the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, London-Fanshawe, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. Yes, I do recall visiting your riding and, yes, it was good to work with you. I think that was good for the area, as well. I think they're a super employer, and we need more of them.

But I'd like to focus on a few things that, in supporting this budget, will happen as a result of that, what we've decided are some of the more strategic initiatives that we

should place as priorities within this budget. One of them that I haven't heard a lot of talk about, and I think we should talk about it more, is youth unemployment in the province of Ontario, because it sticks out like a sore thumb. It's not just related to Ontario. This seems to be a phenomenon in almost all of North America. The unemployment rate hovers between 7% and 8% across the province, but it gets into the high teens for those between 18 and 25. It seems to me that we need to do something about that. We need to match up the skills that the young people are receiving training in to the skills that are needed by industry and allow these young people to set off on a course of fruitful employment for the rest of their lives.

Two other things I think stand out in the process that's taken place—and once again, without being overly generous to the third party, I think they've got a lot out of this budget, and that certainly is the auto insurance reduction. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, I think, brought that issue forward, along with others from all parties. But I think he really drove that issue. It was picked up by the government, and the government decided, "Yes, there's something we can do here, there's some good that can come of this."

Home care for 46,000 seniors, and we're trying to get that five-day wait target that all parties support.

I think everybody benefits as a result of the support of this budget. I think all three parties, if they could find a way to do it, should be supporting it.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being extremely close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 28 May 2013

Mardi 28 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2013 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 27, 2013, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, everyone.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much to the government House leader for that roaring applause this morning.

I'm pleased to join the debate this morning. It gives me a great opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Leeds–Grenville that I'm so privileged to represent here in the chamber. Before I get too far, though, I want to talk about this government's budget, in terms of what it does to Ontarians. I think it's very important that we need to act responsibly here in the chamber this morning.

When the budget was actually tabled—I know this is the motion—the government talked about “a prosperous and fair Ontario.” Those were the words they used. In fact, I think this government's budgetary policy does the opposite. It makes Ontario less prosperous and less fair. How can we create a prosperous province when the trend this Liberal government has had has seen Ontario's debt double during their 10 years at the helm? The fact is that we aren't creating a more prosperous province, because everyone knows—everyone—that you can't spend your way to prosperity. If we could, with the record runaway government spending we've seen over the last 10 years, there wouldn't be that 500,000 or 600,000 Ontarians who woke up this morning without a job. Instead, they'd be headed to work providing a better life for themselves and their families.

To be fair, how could we say this budget is fair when every child that's born in Ontario this morning inherits a \$20,000 debt? How fair is it that that baby boy or girl will grow up in a province where health and education are jeopardized for years to come because this government refused to make those tough decisions today?

That's really the choice that I think this Premier and/or her finance minister faced when they put together this budget.

They could have followed the responsible path, the path and the ideas that our party, the official opposition, and our leader, Tim Hudak, put on the table. We put a number of exceptional policies forward to put us back on the right path. That's the path that would have started for us to reduce the deficit, which we've seen increase with this budget and this budgetary policy of this government. Instead of being responsible, though, the government chose to act as the government always does: in its own political self-interest. They put themselves ahead of the future of the province of Ontario. By choosing to keep piling up the debt in a really desperate attempt to buy support of the third party to save their political hides—maybe someone on the government benches can explain to me how fair that is, because, personally, I just don't see it.

The government's strategy, again, has been to spend their way out of control. Last week, we all know, the leader of the third party accused the government of being corrupt and untrustworthy in the morning, and then she and her party worked out a budget deal with the government in the afternoon. It was pretty inconsistent. I still can't understand how you can explain that to your supporters; I just don't see it. During question period, you would see that you would have this brought forward, and then they would back down in the afternoon.

At the same time, no one seems to want to co-operate and bring forward a confidence motion, which to me is a very important motion to be discussed here. We've tried through our opposition day to have that brought forward, to no avail. I think a vote like that would show whether we have confidence in this government's policy. That's the question that Ontarians wanted answered. For an increasing number of them, the answer to that question is no. The fact that we won't have a confidence vote on the scandal is the NDP's problem to deal with now, and I think it's a big one.

I want to address one comment that we've heard from the government and the third party when it comes to their thumbs-up review to their co-written budget. The NDP like to say they are getting results for Ontarians, and they like to recite all the goodies that the government's put on their credit card: things like a cut in auto insurance, home care support, a youth employment program, infrastructure spending and cash for the recording industry. I guess if you're going to increase spending in two out of every three ministries by \$3.6 billion overall, it's inevitable that

you're going to at least find something that's going to appeal to some folks. We always hear criticism—at least I do—from the benches opposite and beside me about, "Is there nothing in the budget?" I think there is something when you look at one line item that everyone can see is there for them.

The thing that I was shocked about—and we brought it up in question period yesterday—is the government's willingness to gamble \$900 million to cancel a couple of gas plants during the last election. We know the total cost of the seat-saver program now stands at \$585 million and counting. That's wasted money that didn't buy anything for Ontarians, just a few Liberal seats.

I'm actually proud of the people of Leeds–Grenville, because the comments I've heard since the budget have really showed me that they understand that we really can't afford that type of spending. We really can't afford that type of government waste, where the government would put millions and millions of dollars just to save a few seats rather than getting their fiscal house in order.

0910

I've put together my share of budgets. I was involved in municipal politics and have done my share of municipal budgets. I've done my share of budgets in the private sector. I worked in municipal management before I was elected to this place. So I think I understand how the process works. I know, as I said earlier, that you can go to anyone, show them a little line in the budget, a little program, and something is going to appeal to them. But responsible budgeting requires that you focus on the big picture, not just those individual line items. Someone has to be the adult in the room and basically say, "Enough is enough."

The problem that we have here is that there were apparently no adults in the room when this budget is put together. That's why the people I'm hearing from in my riding are so concerned about the direction the province is heading in. They worry, like so many parents, including myself, that they'd be waving to their kids as they put Ontario in the rear-view mirror to find opportunities in other provinces. I know I have a couple of boys who have always chosen that path. It's sad that the opportunities just aren't here in this province.

One of those parents who wrote to me was Joyce Pringle, a constituent of mine in North Grenville. She wrote to me recently to tell me the struggles that her two sons are having as they try to get their construction business established. This isn't really because they don't know their stuff; they certainly do. They've got customers that want to hire them. It's because government is increasingly taking more and more of what they make. Here's some of the things that Joyce wrote to me about recently:

"Now it's the WSIB at the provincial level. We faithfully send them a percentage of the employees' gross salary each quarter. Last year was 8.8%, and that has increased (once again beyond inflation) to 9.1% this year.

"But the WSIB now requires payments for each of the partners in addition to the payments for the workers—at

the same rate, based on the business' net income. With two partners, that comes to 18.2% of their income, almost one fifth!

"When I expressed surprise, the person on the phone told me, 'It's the law.' I'm reminded of the old joke: They have a new, easy two-step method to figure out your taxes. Step 1: How much did you make? Step 2: Send it. Except that no one is laughing.

"In February one son and his wife moved into my basement so that they can save a bit of money because they would like to start a family."

Joyce Pringle goes on to say how close government regulations are to killing the small business and ruining her sons' dreams. I'm wondering if Joyce and her sons are really going to be excited when this budget when they realize that it's inevitable that they're going to be giving more and more to the government because of excess spending. I think we all know the answer to that question.

This is a budget that creates more hardship because it puts off those tough decisions I mentioned earlier that, frankly, should have been made years ago. In fact, there's a startling admission about how negatively this government's runaway spending is impacting our economy. It's right there on page 163, where we see that the finance minister expects the economy to grow by a mere 1.5% this year. That represents the third year in a row that economic growth will decline. Again, when it comes to economic fundamentals, Ontario, under this government, is headed in the wrong direction. Ontario used to be the proud engine of Canada and our economy. Now we're being pulled along by others. We're a have-not province with a \$273-billion debt, double than when the members opposite took over. We're a province that has increased revenue by taking more from hard-working Ontarians, to the tune of \$42 billion over the last 10 years. Even flush with all that revenue, they can't balance the books because their spending has increased at an even faster rate—\$48 billion.

I think it was the Globe and Mail that did a good job summing up the state of affairs with this description of our fiscal situation:

"Nevertheless, \$11.7 billion leaves Ontario with far and away the biggest deficit among Canadian provinces. And while it is also the country's biggest provincial economy, Ontario also has the country's worst deficit relative to GDP. Its net debt—estimated at more than \$250 billion and set to grow by a forecast \$20 billion in the current fiscal year—is the second-highest in the country on both a per capita and a debt-to-GDP basis. It's not pretty, and this budget does little to put ... lipstick on it." That was the Globe and Mail.

I know that people's eyes sometimes glaze over when we start throwing around those types of numbers when we look at dealing with budgets. Again, I mention my experience in municipal politics. When you do a budget there, people want to know what it means to them. Forget all the numbers; forget the stack of paper; forget all the rhetoric; people want to know how it affects their services, how it affects their taxes. That's what they want to know. Those are the questions you get asked.

I want to remind people watching at home today of one thing: This kind of horrible fiscal management will negatively affect all the services that you count on, because even with a government where spending is as out of control as we see with this one, there are consequences to running up large debt and deficits. You can see examples of where people are paying the price today for reduced services.

One of those examples that I'm hearing quite a lot of is in the office of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and it's the \$44-million cut to physiotherapy services. I'm hearing from families and their loved ones in long-term-care facilities who rely on these services. They're concerned at the consequences of a plan that will see the \$110 million spent for physio services for seniors in long-term care cut to \$58.5 million. To my shock, the minister has tried to spin this as an enhancement; but certainly no one is buying it; certainly not the 20 members of the seniors' exercise group at the Executive Condominium who called my office this week upset that their twice-a-week program is disappearing.

Gary Rehan, a physiotherapist who provides great care for seniors at Rosebridge Manor in the community of Jasper in my riding, wrote to me to express his concerns about what he sees happening: "The physiotherapy I provide enables patients to live in relative independence for as long as possible. I worry that the patients I currently treat will see their mobility deteriorate after Aug. 1, 2013.

"The physiotherapy services provided to these seniors, along with enhancing their quality of life and improving their functional abilities and mobility, also helps to reduce the risk of morbidities including fractures, pneumonia and blood clots, to name a few.

"I know that this cut in the critical physiotherapy services will potentially result in an increase in these ... and, in turn, health care utilization." That was from Gary.

He told me that seniors he's treated have improved so much that some of them have been able to return home. Others, he stressed, are able to remain at Rosebridge rather than the much more expensive alternative of being admitted to hospital. The physiotherapy he provides is actually saving money in our health care system in the long run. That's the bottom line that I think most of us on this side of the House want to hear.

The government that is so desperate to make some cuts in some spending areas, basically with its dance partner, has to make better decisions in the long run for Ontarians. I could give you lots of examples of how those decisions should be changed. Physiotherapy is just one of them.

So when someone questions me on why I'm not going to vote for a budget that promises, for example, a \$100-million infrastructure program for small municipalities, I ask them to take a step back. I want them not to focus on one or two things that they may find appealing in a disastrous budget, but to look at the budget in its entirety. If they do that, I'm confident that they'll see that they're like so many others I've talked to in the past who feel we

just simply can't afford it. So I'm not voting against the \$100 million for infrastructure. I'm not voting against \$260 million in home care or \$400 million to increase social assistance or \$100 million for the Ontario Brain Institute or \$290 million for youth jobs—the list goes on and on; I'm sure everybody is getting the picture.

0920

I think we have to stand and vote against the budget because we have a responsibility to do it. We have a responsibility to be the adult in the room and to be the party that sets our fiscal policy back on track. We can no longer be the economic caboose; we need to be the economic engine.

I think it's not about whether you're PC, Liberal or NDP; whether you're red, blue or orange. I think you have to go back to that baby boy or baby girl, that new Ontarian that I spoke about earlier, one that could be my grandchild, that inherited a \$20,000 debt because we didn't fix this province's crisis when we had the chance. I think that's really what we're talking about this morning. That's the type of fiscal policy that people expect us to do.

I'm going to share a quote from the Fraser Institute. Here's what they wrote:

"Had the Liberals actually spent prudently over the past decade there would be no deficit; in fact, the province would have a \$12-billion surplus!

"Since 2003-04, actual program spending increased from \$70.4 billion to \$113.6 billion in 2012-13. Had program spending increased by the rate of inflation and population growth, current program spending would be \$22 billion lower. That means the province would already be in surplus and would have accumulated significantly less debt over the last decade."

That's what I hear from folks in Leeds–Grenville.

The budget forecasts an \$11.7-billion deficit at the end of the fiscal year. The Fraser Institute analysis shows that if the government had only increased spending to account for inflation and population growth, we'd have a \$12-billion surplus. That's a difference of \$23.7 billion from where we are to where I think we should be.

I only have a few seconds left. I think it's very important that when we talk about budget policy, we have made some sensible and some pragmatic suggestions for the budget that the government has ignored. We've seen the soap opera play out this year again with the New Democrats and the Liberal government members. So I'm not going to support this government's budgetary policy. I think we owe it to those young Ontarians that are being born today to stand up with them and stand up for a better Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I wish to welcome to this chamber a former member of this House: Mr. Wayne Wettlaufer, the MPP for Kitchener Centre and Kitchener in the 36th and 37th Parliaments.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville for his perspective on this situation.

Mine's a little different, Speaker. Frankly, I'm a little tired of the official opposition saying things like "coalition" and "NDP budget" on and on. Well, folks, here's the real truth: The NDP got results for the people we represent. The official opposition got nothing because they said no and they didn't read it. Why? Because their real agenda is to get power, and once they get power, this is what you're going to get, folks: You're going to get a right-to-work state. You're going to attack unions. You're going to get more tax breaks for big corporations. You're going to attack construction people. You're going to attack teachers. You're going to attack nurses. Nothing for the most vulnerable in our province; nothing for the needy. You're going to force people back to work even though they have a collective agreement; you're going to ignore that. So the bottom line, Speaker, is, if you really want to read the white paper, you've got to look through the lines because, as I said yesterday, the white paper, in my opinion, is two-ply or one-ply. It's not really a white paper. The bottom line is that I'm sick and tired of them criticizing.

You know, I'm not 100% in favour of what's going on, but at least I've fought for my people and what they wanted. We consulted with the people of Ontario. We consulted with my constituents. They told me what they wanted, and with all due respect, I've got one of the toughest ridings for being rebellious in the whole province. I've got tough unions. I've got tough people. But the numbers aren't telling us that people want an election. The numbers aren't telling us that they aren't happy with what we've done.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP did the right thing: We sat down, we negotiated, we got results from the sitting government, and we're going to stick to what we do. I am not going to go back to my people and say, "I said no. We got nothing. I'm just going to say no to everything, and I'm not going to read anything." Not good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That's a bit of a tough act to follow, but I have to agree with the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek in many ways. At the end of the day, we have a budget, but what counts the most is how Ontarians feel about the budget. That is indeed what we're trying to do—I believe that's what the third party is trying to do—in terms of making sure that not only are there things in the budget that resonate with Ontarians and that strike that balance between fiscal responsibility and a fair society, but it actually resonates with people in their everyday lives. That's what's very important.

I know, for me, right after the budget came out, the very next day all the Scarborough MPPs—I'm one of six Scarborough MPPs—went and did a budget breakfast. That's what we did, the very next day, with the local chamber of commerce—actually, it's Rotary now. It used to be a chamber of commerce; it's now the Rotary group. So that was the beginning of a process to go out and talk about the budget and get feedback on it. Having said that, there was also a lot of feedback to the building of the budget.

I think when the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek spoke, his feedback is similar to what I hear in my own riding of Pickering-Scarborough East, and that is that people are generally happy with it. People want to move forward. People do not want an election. They want us to govern. They want all the parties to work together and do what's in the best interests of Ontarians.

The feedback I've had is very consistent with what the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has heard. It's one of, "Get the job done. Do what you were asked to do when you got elected, and make this minority government work." I think that it behooves all parties to do that, and that's what I'm certainly going to do on behalf of my constituents of Pickering-Scarborough East.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to stand and comment on the 20-minute presentation by my friend from Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Clark—a very thoughtful presentation. He kind of walked everybody through the entire process and the fiscal challenges that our province is facing right now, the responsible budgeting that hasn't occurred for the last 10 years under the McGuinty and Wynne governments, and the lack of adults in the room when it comes to planning for the future of not just our generation but the generations to come. That's something that's been lacking on behalf of the government.

Mr. Clark comes from this from a number of different angles, being a municipal politician, where you can't run up a \$12-billion deficit year after year because your people expect more than that. But for some reason, this Liberal government doesn't seem to realize that there are responsibilities that come with managing the people's money. They continue to run up record deficits and double our debt during that time. So I think the member from Leeds-Grenville did an excellent job at outlining where we're going.

He made a very thoughtful presentation for 20 minutes and then, in two minutes, this typhoon came in and blew any kind of reason out of the water. This NDP that is propping up this scandal-plagued government that for months and months and months stood here in the House and talked about how they were killing harness racing, and they talked about how they were ringing up \$100 million for this gas plant cancellation and \$900 million for another gas plant cancellation—and yet, when given the opportunity to finally bring down a scandal-plagued government, what do they do? They vote along with them. They turn their backs on the people whom they've been fighting for for the last 18 months for lower hydro rates, to bring harness racing back to the province, to bring responsible government to the province. They missed the opportunity. They turned their backs on the people of Ontario—a missed opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would remind the House that interjections are out of order.

Questions and comments?

0930

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that poignant reminder. It seems that, in here, the opposition has decided to replace any rationale with an increased level of decibels, and it certainly isn't effective. It's something that they've done for the 18 months that I've been in this House. The only ideas, the only action I've seen from them, are a ringing of the bells that occupied a massive amount of time, and pounding on the desk, as if a corporate boss was just absolutely adamantly against any type of agenda.

I want to say that I caught the end of the member for Leeds–Grenville's speech. He spoke to the fact that some of the cuts that are built into the budget will affect program delivery and ultimately service. There's no question about that, that cuts do affect program delivery and service. But his remedy for that is deeper cuts to program delivery and service, and he says that deeper cuts will lead to better, increased services. I don't understand that rationale.

I also don't understand how they can, despite any economic theology that they may subscribe to—and we know roughly what it is; it's a right-wing, corporate, capitalist, free-market agenda. Despite that, they avoid the fact that we need to look at the revenue side of the equation in budgetary measures—never a spoken word about how this province needs revenue—and are reluctant to acknowledge that tax cuts are actually spending measures. They'll never make that equation; they'll never connect the dots on that. Tax cuts are just an automatic, reflexive response by the government that should be a staple of any governance model—it shouldn't be. It should be done strategically and specifically, and that's what New Democrats have long proposed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank my colleague the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, the Minister of Consumer Services, the member for Essex and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for their comments.

I'm just going to continue to talk in light of what I spoke of earlier.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can't hear you, Steve.

Mr. Steve Clark: Sorry, Rosie; I'm a little hoarse this morning.

We can continue to burden our children and grandchildren with more debt and we can continue to put off those tough decisions, or we can resolve to do better. We can spend within our means, and we can get government out of the way, to create some private sector jobs in this province.

I'm pretty proud of our party. We've put forward dozens and dozens of very good ideas that would set a different path, a more prosperous path, a fairer path for Ontarians.

I don't think this government was ever interested in hearing our ideas. If they were, we'd have a public sector wage freeze in this budget. We'd have arbitration reform. We would have taken Mr. Wilson's bill, his very thought-

ful arbitration proposals, and put them in the budget. But of course, this government didn't do that. That's why in my riding, taxpayers are facing a retroactive double-digit pay hike from an arbitrator's award last week.

The government had a choice, and they chose what they've always done: They've decided to buy the support of the NDP. They've included \$1 billion of gifts and goodies to be able to secure their support. They've doubled down on this runaway spending that has been, really, the hallmark of both the McGuinty and the Wynne governments.

I think it's going to be very clear, as we move forward in this vote, who is standing up for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the budget motion?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to the budget motion. I'm going to begin by referencing a number of things that my friend from Leeds–Grenville mentioned. I count him as a friend of mine; I do. But I disagree with him and his party on a number of areas, and it has to do with the things that he referenced.

He says we can't spend our way to prosperity, which is something that he and all the other Conservative members raise each and every time that they are in this debate. Here's the problem, as I see it—and I could be wrong, of course: Governments need revenue; is that not correct? To run a government, we need revenue.

Here is the problem: When you cut corporate taxes each and every year, which the Conservatives have done and the Liberals have colluded with over the years in terms of cutting corporate taxes, when you lose revenues to the tune of \$17 billion or \$18 billion over a 20-year period, you and my fine Liberal friends, what it means is that revenues go down, and according to the Conservative political ideology, therefore, you are spending a whole lot of money on services that you then argue you cannot afford. You get the picture: Less revenue—

Mr. Randy Hillier: We're spending \$120 billion a year.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you missed the first part. You see, Speaker, they don't listen, and that's the problem. I was trying to produce a simple argument, and then they say, "Yeah, but you can't spend your way out of it." I understand the argument. If revenues were up here, then the costs to government would be less than what we raised by way of income, or at least equal to, or at least we would be able to manage our budgets. But when revenues are down, then all of the costs go up. That's inevitable.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Sort of like my auto insurance.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What about the auto insurance?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It just went up 5%, thanks to the government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. And if your revenues of income do not keep up with it—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're not listening; that's the problem. You're blah, blah, blah, blah, and he doesn't

listen; that's the problem. The member from Northumberland argues that the auto insurance rates have gone up, and—I don't know the point. But the point I'm making is, if auto insurance rates go up and your salary doesn't keep up with it, those auto increases are going to whack you and you're going to feel the weight of the auto insurance increases. Is that not correct?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: That's what you just did. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. So the non-sequitur doesn't connect.

The point I make is that if revenues are down, you can't keep up with your costs. The Tories keep on saying, "You can't spend your way out of prosperity," and they're right, except they don't say that the revenues need to be maintained. And you cannot cut corporate taxes forever; you can't. What is the answer of the Tories with respect to how we grow the economy? My good friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—my God, is it ever a big riding—argues that the best way to move the economy is to give the corporations further tax cuts. That's their argument each and every time, and quite frankly, my friends from Lanark and Leeds-Grenville, you guys have it wrong. You guys have it completely wrong. If you were right—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see, the Speaker is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt, but I would ask the member for Trinity-Spadina to make his comments through the Chair. I would ask the members of the official opposition to stop heckling him so that I can hear him.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There you go, Speaker. I thank you for that, because I would speak to you all the time if it were not for the heckles that I get, and then I've got to look at them. It's hard to be heckled by the members and look at you as they speak. You understand that, right?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see what I'm saying? I have to look at him because he's talking to me. And I'm okay with talking to him—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —or him, or them, but I want to speak through you, Speaker. So every now and then you stand up and you remind them to shut up, if you know what I mean.

So the argument about how you make the economy grow by cutting corporate taxes is simply fundamentally wrong, because it hasn't worked. We have looked at the evidence—and I don't know what Tories look at by way of evidence, but we have looked at the evidence, and the jobs are not there.

Not only are the jobs not there, but they're not well-paying jobs, either. Most of the work that is available is part-time casual work, contract work. That's what we have. So when my friend from Leeds-Grenville says that he's worried about that little boy and little girl growing up and they won't have the opportunities, he's absolutely

right. I worry about that too, but for different reasons. He says that if we cut down on our expenditures, that little boy and that little gal are going to have a better future. No, they're not. That little gal and that little boy, under a Conservative ideology, are not going to do very well. We can see that under a Liberal government, a Conservative government—those little gals are suffering today.

0940

Now, we look at the university students that are coming out of universities and, yes, they are well educated. We have a more well-educated public than I've ever seen before, except they are not getting the jobs that they study for. They're not getting the jobs for which they studied. Not only that, they're not making the income they hoped they would make as a result of leaving with a four-year degree or a master's degree or, indeed, a PhD. Most PhD students can't get a job in a university anymore; they've got to go out of the country to find a job. What kind of hope do we have for that little gal and that little guy when PhDs have to try to find work outside of the country?

Mr. Randy Hillier: They can go to Alberta and Saskatchewan where the Conservative governments are, right?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Randy Hillier: They go out to Alberta and Saskatchewan to get those jobs—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right.

Mr. Randy Hillier: —where there's a Conservative government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And if we could just keep cutting corporate taxes, they would stay here, wouldn't they, member from Lanark? If they could just cut those corporate taxes, everything would be rosy in rosy land, right?

The fact of the matter is, that's not true, and they keep perpetuating a myth that some people buy, and God knows that there's a few intelligent people out there fighting back. The Lord can be merciful, but sometimes you wonder whether they're paying attention because the ideology of the Conservative Party works for a lot of people. They believe it.

Their attack on civil servants seems to connect with the public. We believe in civil servants; we believe in governments. We believe in governments existing to regulate an economy that sometimes goes overboard, as we saw in the dot-com collapse, as we saw in the collapse of properties in America, and not yet here, but it may come.

We have seen the collapse of the banking industry all over the world started by the US and we have seen anywhere from \$5 trillion to \$11 trillion spent by governments to bail out the banks, the very institutions that Tories love to support. Close to \$11 trillion has been spent by governments to support a market that doesn't work, that often fails us. Unless we regulate that industry, we're going to see, each and every time, a collapse of countries. So then Conservatives and the banking industry call upon governments to become socialist and bail

them out. No sooner do they get the \$11 trillion from the government, so-called “socialist,” that as soon as they recover they’re back into their \$11-million salaries, \$20-million salaries—God bless them—and they’re back to work when we get stuck with the debt. We, the taxpayers, get stuck with the debt.

You got to love them capitalists; you got to love them Tories. They love governments. They love governments to be there to bail out their markets as soon as they collapse. It works so well for them; it works so well for you.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: You’re bailing out the Liberals.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That’s a different discussion we’re into.

I have disagreed with Tories over the years and I’ve disagreed with Liberals over the years, particularly under the regime of Dalton McGuinty, the then Premier, who colluded with the Tories in cutting corporate taxes and cutting income taxes when we have huge deficits. How do you explain that? We have huge deficits, and Tories and Liberals keep cutting corporate taxes when we don’t have the money, when we need that money to pay for the programs that people rely on. The government was laughing—not laughing, but proudly proclaiming—“We’ve cut income taxes to the tune of \$1.3 billion.” They were cheerful about it; happy, smiling: “We cut income taxes to the tune of \$1.3 billion and we got a deficit”—the then deficit—“of \$20 billion.” You need revenue and you cut revenues from governments. How do you explain that, as Liberals?

Mercifully, we have a new leader that sounds a bit more lefty, and we might be able to arrest some of the corporate tax cuts. The NDP forced McGuinty to freeze the corporate taxes, which was a positive development. We hope to be able to squeeze a little more from Liberals with respect to that, but they are a bit reluctant in that regard.

Our role, as New Democrats, is to make government work, because that’s what people want. People want parties to try to solve their differences. They do not like governments and opposition parties that are in constant conflict with each other. They want governments to work for them. Our job, as a political party, is to make it work. It’s to find ways to improve the lives of Ontarians as best we can. That is the job of this opposition party. Our job is to try to make minority work for them—not to work for us, not to work for the Liberal Party, but to work for people. And that is what we need to do.

What have we fought for? We have fought for better home care with a five-day guarantee. Why? There are 6,000 people on a waiting list—over 6,000 people on a waiting list—who are not getting home care. The ones who are getting home care are getting inadequate care. And Liberals know it, because they get the same calls we do. I know it from a personal perspective. They probably know it from a personal perspective, but they also know from their constituents that the home care that they’re looking for is simply not there for them.

Tory governments and Liberal governments have de-institutionalized care and have said, “What we need to do

is provide the care in their home.” The problem is, the care in the home is not there. Wealthy Ontarians can take care of themselves, and people who don’t have money have to take care of themselves in the best way that they can. And what is that? The best way that they can protect themselves is to have their children, their extended family, look after them. Is that what we want? It apparently seems so, because both Tories and Liberals have allowed this to go on.

We have divested ourselves as governments and put the responsibility of care on families. The problem is, the majority of families no longer have the time or the money to take care of their own. It’s becoming a social disaster.

So we push for better home care, and we push, particularly, for a five-day guarantee. Why, do you say, a guarantee? Because unless we have a guarantee, people are not going to get the care that they need.

Liberals are saying, “We’re going to have a target.” A target means that 6,000 people waiting probably will not get the care that they need, and the home care that people get now is completely inadequate.

You have people with Alzheimer’s getting an hour or two a day of support. We’re talking about Alzheimer’s, which means that family members who want to take care of their own relatives in their own homes get very little support in their homes. They might get, at best, one or two hours a day—at best—which means that the bulk of the time has to be spent by families to take care of their own.

That’s why I want to be a millionaire. I want to be a corporation to get the tax credit, to get the benefits—the loopholes—that the Liberals and Tories have allowed over the years. I need to be a company so I can have extra money to help my own.

I often say to the Liberals and the Tories, “I don’t want to get old in this province.” Why? Because without a pension, I and 65% of the population out there are going to suffer in the future, because our children—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Northumberland, where are you going?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: You won’t retire because you have no pension.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: People without an adequate pension are going to be on their own. Hopefully, they will have—

Interjection.

0950

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member for York South, I’m so glad you’re fighting for a pension within your own Liberal caucus. So far, we haven’t gotten very far. Without adequate pensions and without adequate incomes, people are going to be on their own, struggling. So we pushed for home care.

We pushed for a reduction in auto insurance. Why? Because the auto insurance rates are the highest in the country. My friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has been pressing the government on this for the last year.

We said we need to help people out. We need to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%. Why? Because their profits—God love them, God bless them—have been good. They have been good, but they constantly complain they're not earning enough. They constantly complain, "My God, fraud is the biggest thing we have since sliced white bread. Unless we deal with fraud, we won't have any profits." The problem is, insurance companies are making good money, and they're making good money on the backs of the cuts we have made to their benefits. It's just not right; it's not fair. So we said we need to reduce the auto insurance rates by 15%. We're not going to get it. We're not quite sure what the timeline is going to be, so we need to continue pushing Liberals in that regard.

But my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has reminded us that in some of the areas of the GTA, insurance companies are slowly increasing their insurance rates by up to close to—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Some 10%, 15%.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —10%, 15%, which will allow them to reduce rates by 15% by the time the Liberal government gets through with these changed initiatives.

In the end, what's going to happen? How are the Liberals going to make the insurance companies accountable for those increases while we have the highest rates of auto insurance in the whole country? It's simply not right for people. It is simply not right.

We talked about youth unemployment as a serious issue. Youth unemployment is serious and getting more serious. They're unemployed and will be continually unemployed and will be underemployed in spite of the degrees that they have and in spite of all the debt they're incurring because of the incredible tuition fee increases under the Conservative government and, incredibly, 5% increases under the Liberal government for the last 10 years. They come out with huge debts, with great degrees, and they'll be largely underemployed and in most cases, or at least some cases, they will be unemployed. So we pushed the Liberals for an employment strategy that gets them working, and that's important.

We finally fought for better accountability of governments. How do you hold governments accountable? It doesn't matter whether you're Liberal, Tory or NDP. How do you hold us accountable? We have proposed a financial accountability office that would have the same power the budget officer had in Ottawa that held Tories up there accountable. And, boy, did Harper hate that budget officer.

Mercifully, we had a budget officer that held governments accountable constantly. Where governments would say the—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The F-35s.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —the F-35s only cost \$16 billion, the budget chief says, "No, no, it's more than double."

You need a budget officer that is there to expose the dissembling of governments, without which governments would do what they want, and there would absolutely no accountability of a party or a government. So we urged

the government to set up this financial accountability office. We believe that's important. The Liberals have said they're going to do it.

We're happy. We are happy that we made some gains for working men and women out there who desperately need support of governments and opposition parties, and we give them what we possibly could give them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks from the member for Trinity-Spadina on the budget.

I must begin by saying I totally agree with his observation that what our constituents expect from us—my constituents in Guelph, his constituents in Trinity-Spadina and, I dare say, the constituents of the official opposition as well—what our constituents want is for us to make government work. They want us to look for the ideas that we have in common and to build on the ideas that we have in common.

The member from Trinity Spadina spoke at length about the issue of youth unemployment, and we agree: That is a huge issue. We need to do something about it, so what we have done in this budget is that we have included a \$295-million allocation to work on the problem of youth unemployment. Some of that—the bulk of it, \$195 million—will be used on some more conventional approaches to working with employers to make sure that they are giving youth a first job. Actually, they're the sort of programs that Conservatives quite often like, traditionally, but then, I guess they haven't read the budget, so they don't know that it's there.

But \$100 million is going to some more unconventional approaches, if I could say. There's some money which is going to an entrepreneurship fund to help young adults set up their own business, because we know we need to encourage entrepreneurs in our economy. Some of it is going to an innovation fund, because we know there are lots of students who are working in research settings in their academic programs who may have some innovative ideas that they could turn into jobs and into businesses, so there's some money there for the innovators in our society. I think that we're really making inroads on this problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It was quite stirring to hear the member from Trinity-Spadina ramble on about past governments and how devastated the province was when Mr. Harris was here. I just want to say to the member that I respect his anecdotes, and of course he's a well-instituted individual here, but at the same time, I think he's forgotten how well the province of Ontario actually was doing when Mike Harris came in and made the changes needed after Bob Rae was the Premier here. Actually, even when I go back home, there's many a CUPE member in my riding who, to this day, idolizes Bob Rae—not. Bob Rae is a bad taste in their mouth, and these are strong union people.

But I want to talk about what has actually transpired here. When I'm at home, I do hear from some people, and they don't say, "We don't want an election." They say, "We can't afford to have an election." That takes me by surprise, because once I point out to those individuals that, in fact, this Liberal/NDP government and the deputy premier, Ms. Horwath, are spending \$2 million an hour more than we're bringing in in revenue, I say, "Well, if it costs \$96 million for an election, the election would be paid for in two days." Two days, Mr. Speaker, right? How can the province of Ontario not afford to have an election on this train wreck that this NDP and Liberal government is on?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am so pleased to rise to comment on my colleague from Trinity-Spadina's eloquent and somewhat—I think it's poetic. When he stands to deliver, people rush in here to hear what he has to say, but are they actually listening? We know that often when he points out some of the real structural failures—I would even say some of the cracks in the Conservative argument—they tend to just plug their ears, and they don't want to listen to what he has to say.

But on the topic of just triggering an election, I can tell you that we canvassed this province wide and large to get the sentiment of what people wanted—

Interjection: Wide and large?

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: Far and wide. We know that the opposition party, the Conservatives, are eager for an election, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, myself personally, as an individual, I am not anxious to get rid of Tim Hudak as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. I want him there for as long as possible; in fact, I need him there as the leader of the PC Party.

Stephen Harper is actually someone whom we should continue to look at. He does a good job in absolutely destroying any real semblance of what true conservatism is. It's the Reform Party incarnate. It's easy to pick apart those arguments when it comes to a good, healthy economy, because they have done nothing, proposed nothing, to help the men and women and communities in this province and in this country.

We are, as New Democrats, proud to deliver on some results that haven't been delivered in quite some time. I'm thankful that this budget has put our ideas forward and actually is going to deliver those results.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I listened very intently to the member from Trinity-Spadina, and also the Minister of Education, Northumberland-Quinte West and the excellent comments from the member from Essex.

I was particularly intrigued by the member from Trinity-Spadina when he talked about and actually lectured and taught the Conservative opposition about what revenues and expenses and budgeting are all about, and he's absolutely right. It's a matter of making this government work.

In October 2011, Ontarians did make a decision. They decided: Liberal government, NDP third party, Conservatives opposition. Ontarians didn't want the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker. They remember back to the days of the slash-and-burn. They are relying on this government—it looks like, with the co-operation of the third party, because we're not getting any co-operation at all whatsoever from the Progressive Conservatives. Their position was rejected. They've worked with us, and they make Ontario work, and that's what we want.

I listened intently to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, and he referred to two- and three-ply white papers. I'm going to think he was referring to Kleenex, because if, God forbid, if the Conservatives ever got into power again, there'd be a lot of Kleenex. There would be a lot of people on the front lawns. There would be cutting and slashing and burning—something that Ontarians don't want to go back to.

I congratulate the third party for working with us in government. I respect what they're doing. They respect Ontarians. If the Conservatives would just, again, respect the decision that was made—let's have a four-year term, working together for Ontarians, instead of only working in their own self-interest. This is a good budget; let's get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Trinity-Spadina for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What New Democrats want is to improve the lives of working men and women in Ontario. That's our objective, and that's what we believe we have accomplished in this budget. We believe we have made it better for working men and women.

We talked about increasing revenues, and that's why we said to the Liberals, "We need to eliminate the employer health tax exemption on the first \$400,000 in payroll for companies with more than \$5 million. We don't believe they need that break." So they did that; they eliminated that break. Except businesses with up to \$5 million in payroll will see their employer health tax exemption increase to \$450,000, which effectively eliminates from provincial coffers that revenue, which we believe is close to \$100 million that we desperately need. Why would they do that? That, I do not understand.

Then we talked the corporate tax loopholes, which are set to come into effect and would allow corporations to write off the HST on entertainment and meals. That comes off in 2015. What we said to the Liberals is, "You've got to make that a permanent delay." Corporations do not need an entertainment tax writeoff. Corporations don't need a meal tax writeoff. I need it; they don't. Ontarians need that tax break, not the corporations, who are doing fine—just fine.

We urged the Liberals to send a strong message to the Conservative Party, and they didn't include any of that in the budget. We're talking about \$1.3 billion that we could bring back into government revenues. The government refuses to put it in the budget. What did they do before the budget motion comes into effect? They simply write a letter to Jim Flaherty saying, "Please"—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: “Dear Jim.”

Mr. Rosario Marchese: “Dear Jim: Help us out.” It seems half-hearted. Their heart was not in that revenue-generating idea that we put forth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the budget motion?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to rise and become part of the debate on the budget motion this Tuesday morning. I understand we’ll probably break in about 10 minutes. I’ve got 20 minutes here this morning, and I guess I’ll have to resume this afternoon after routine proceedings. I look forward to doing that.

I thought, Speaker, I would begin by speaking a little bit this morning about our budget, of course, but specifically about the deficit and where we find ourselves. It has been something that, obviously, both opposition parties have had something to say about when they’ve risen and spoken on the budget motion. I think the part that I find most interesting when the budget discussion ensues, as it often does, and the deficit position that we find ourselves in, would be that a person who perhaps has not been following these issues too closely—and there are not many people like that—might be led to believe and conclude that Ontario was the only jurisdiction nationally or sub-nationally on the planet that went through the recession, the greatest recession since the 1930s. We know, of course, that that’s not the case. We know, of course, that across the globe, through the recession that hit in 2008, that began in around 2008, some 30 million to 40 million people lost their jobs—30 million to 40 million. Of course, Ontario was not spared from that economic carnage. But the opposition would like you to believe that they were.

We took a different path. We took a very clear different path, as did many other jurisdictions across the planet. What they decided to do, largely, for many of them, based on lessons that were learned from the Great Depression in the 1930s, is, as bad and as difficult as it was going to be as a result of the economic collapse across the globe—there was a decision made that we needed to invest in the economy, that we needed to find mechanisms to stimulate the economy. Yes, that was done through borrowing money, and yes, those decisions in 2008 did lead us to the position that we find ourselves in today: in a deficit position.

I would say, Speaker, that achieving a balanced budget position by 2017-18 is the same target that was picked by both opposition parties, and that the budget document clearly lays out that we are on track to meet that deficit reduction and come back into a balanced position. We’re doing it. And not all jurisdictions are able to achieve that. We do know very clearly that, at the federal level, they are having severe struggles in terms of making that budget target, or the targets that they have set for themselves.

For my friends in the official opposition, I always feel I need to provide a little reminder about what we came into in 2003. People who have been here since then—and that was the first year that I was elected—will remember

very clearly that we were promised, in the lead-up to the 2003 election, that the books of the province of Ontario were balanced. We were very clearly told that. Of course, not long after the election, we found out that, in fact, far from being balanced, the books of the province of Ontario had a \$5.5-billion deficit. That’s a Provincial Auditor number; that was not a government number. The auditor of the province of Ontario, an independent officer of this Legislature, clearly said that, in fact, we had a \$5.5-billion deficit.

It’s important to remember that that \$5.5-billion deficit that was left to us by the outgoing Conservative government was left to us at a time when the economy in Ontario, the economy in Canada, the economy internationally, was doing incredibly well. The Canadian dollar was trading at 63 or 70 cents, and the price of a barrel of oil was far lower than it is today. All of the variables were in place to help the Ontario economy do very well as a primarily export-driven economy. With the United States as our biggest trading partner and the US economy red-hot and all of those things working in favour of the provincial Conservatives at that time, they still somehow managed to leave the incoming Liberal government with a \$5.5-billion deficit. How is that possible under those circumstances?

1010

I always feel it’s necessary to remind people about that because, of course, it’s the Conservatives who like to remind people, or say to people, “We’re the party who will take care of your pocketbook for you. If you want to have a well-managed province fiscally, you need us to be in charge because we can do it.” During a period of incredible economic growth, we were still left with a \$5.5-billion deficit.

Speaker, it’s important to put another piece on to that because, in fact, that \$5.5-billion deficit was much higher, wasn’t it? Because in the lead-up to the 2003 provincial election, the provincial Conservative government of the day in Ontario decided that they needed to try and minimize that debt, that deficit they were hiding, and what did they do? Well, they did a couple of significant things. They did several things, but they did two significant things.

One, they downloaded, or had been downloading, starting from the late 1990s, a tremendous amount of what were always, historically, provincial government services. They downloaded them onto municipalities and stuck them into the residential property tax base, so that the people in Thunder Bay–Atikokan and all the municipalities that I represent and all municipalities around the province had embedded in their residential property tax bases the responsibility for the delivery of services that had heretofore been a provincial responsibility. That was valued at billions of dollars off-loaded from the books of the province of Ontario, and yet we still came in with a \$5.5-billion deficit. That’s one of the things that they did.

Another one of the things that they did: They sold a piece of highway—was it the 407?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: The 407.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm not familiar with the highways in southern Ontario.

The 407: I'm told that that highway, when it was sold by the outgoing Conservatives, was valued at \$11 billion, \$10 billion, \$8 billion, \$12 billion—who knows? It was valued at \$8 billion to \$12 billion. They sold it. What came into the treasury, on a 99-year lease of privatization—we went to court to try to get the tolls reduced for the people, the drivers in southern Ontario. We weren't successful. For the treasury, that yielded \$3 billion.

So my point is simply this—we could talk about that for an hour. My point is simply this: That \$3 billion came into the treasury—what year did they sell the 407? I don't know.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: In 2002.

Mr. Bill Mauro: In 2002. So the \$5.5 billion we found ourselves with would have been \$8.5 billion had that highway not been sold. If we were able to actually capture the costs of the downloaded services into the municipal residential property tax base, the deficit that we would have been left, as the incoming Liberal government, would have been \$10 billion, \$11 billion, \$12 billion a year at a time when the economy of Ontario, of Canada, of the United States, our biggest trading partner, was red-hot. You know, this has taken up almost eight minutes of my time, but I always love to tell that little story.

I would say only one more thing on the deficit. If you think it only happened in Ontario, you don't have to look any further than our federal Conservative cousins who, when they came in—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Their federal Conservative cousins. Thank you.

When they came in—remembering that this was the reformed Conservative group that came in in 2006—they were left with a \$13-billion surplus by the outgoing Liberal government of Paul Martin. A \$13-billion surplus in 2006, and today the deficit number federally is somewhere in the magnitude of about \$26 billion. I'm not sure. Their number seems to keep changing.

If people are interested in the deficit, I ask them simply: If it's the Conservatives who can manage your books for you, what happened at the federal level? When they're trying to tell you that this only occurred in Ontario—I know that the people of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the riding that I represent, and I think most people across the province of Ontario, understand very clearly that we went through a very difficult economic circumstance in Ontario, as did the rest of the provinces, and the suggestion—the absolute suggestion—that we were the only jurisdiction to be dealing with these challenges is, quite frankly, ridiculous. I think most people understand that. I do believe that most people were pleased with where we landed.

Speaker, I see you looking at the clock. Are you looking for me to—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: And I will continue about 3:30 or 4 o'clock today. All right. Thank you, Speaker.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I don't believe they're here yet, but they will be. They're en route: a high school from my area, OSCVI from Owen Sound. Michael Harris is the teacher, and Michael used to be a staffer here at Queen's Park. We welcome them to Queen's Park for the day.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to the Legislature Julie Pontarollo, who is the mom of page Jessica Pontarollo from the great riding of York South–Weston. She is in the gallery this morning, and I would like to welcome her to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce to the Legislative Assembly two members from our great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex—namely, the other part of Essex, which is Leamington. I'd like to introduce Tony Vidal and, of course, Jeremy Pilon. They're here with us today.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd ask the House to join me in welcoming one of my constituents, Ms. Susan Colbert Wright.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions of guests?

I would like to make a comment about the individual who has decided that whistling is something we should be hearing in the House, and I'd ask them to stop.

On behalf of the member from Davenport and on behalf of Simon LiVolsi, the page—his dad, Roberto, is here, and we welcome him to Queen's Park today.

A group from Brantford is visiting question period and the Legislature from Brantlyn Community School in Brantford. Grade 5 teacher John Tipper and his class are here to visit Parliament. We welcome them.

Finally, in the Speaker's gallery today we have a group from the Ontario Real Estate Association, Brant-Brantford: President John Oddi is here, along with his delegation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm absolutely sure that the Minister of Rural Affairs—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm absolutely sure that the Minister of Rural Affairs would allow me to do my introduction.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Shall we try again? Thank you.

In the Speaker's gallery today—that makes me feel much better, to use my inside voice—is the president of the Brant-Brantford Ontario Real Estate Association, John Oddi, along with his delegation, and the chair of the

government relations committee from OREA, Richard Leroux, is here. We welcome them for visiting us today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that I do have your undivided attention, I'd like to introduce you to this session's pages, if they would assemble, please.

From Scarborough—Rouge River, Lamiha Abdullah; from York—Simcoe, Farzan Farnaghi; from Mississauga South, Melanie Forbes; from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Andréa Franche; from Ottawa Centre, Laura Halpenny; from Oak Ridges—Markham, Alex Hu; from Sarnia—Lambton, Hannah Lacey; from Kitchener—Waterloo, Jeffrey Zihong Lin; from Davenport, Simon LiVolsi; from Simcoe—Grey, Christine Majer; from Etobicoke Centre, Edgar Martinez Chavez; from Toronto Centre, Hooriya Masood; from Mississauga—Erindale, Sean Mathew; from Halton, Jack Mogus; from Burlington, Eric Orosz; from Perth—Wellington, Vanessa Ortelli; from Ajax—Pickering, Carlo Miguel Padilla; from York South—Weston, Jessica Pontarollo; from Don Valley West, Michael Sambasivam; from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Jakob Walter; and from Richmond Hill, Jimmy Yan.

These are your pages for this session of the assembly. It is now time for our question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. The release of the Metrolinx report yesterday opened up a whole new realm of taxes and fees for Ontario's taxpayers. You may call them revenue tools, but a tax is a tax. These taxes will cost the average family \$1,000 per year. Low-income students who don't even drive will get taxed \$140 a year, and seniors on fixed incomes will be taxed \$120 a year.

Premier, why don't you do the hard work of combing through your budget to find \$2 billion worth of savings before you go to your automatic default provision and hit Ontario families, seniors and students with yet another tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To paraphrase my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, congestion is congestion is congestion. The reality is that we are going to have to deal with the congestion in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area. The reason we're going to have to deal with that is that for decades, there has not been the work done that should have been done. That's the reality. We are playing catch-up.

There are projects that were started. There was a line that was to be built along Eglinton. The hole was dug; the hole was filled in by the previous government. If that subway had been built, it would be running today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start right off. Normally I have to deal with—stop the clock for a moment. Normally I have to deal with the opposition while the Premier is speaking. Now I'm dealing with members of her own cabinet and her own side heckling while she's trying to answer. That doesn't change anything. It doesn't change anything. I'm asking for some spiral up instead of down. So if those people who want to heckle—they'd better be in their seat, so that I can tell them to stop heckling. I think somebody has got my message.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To respond, the point I'm making is that there has been a neglect of this file for many years. When we came into office in 2003, we started building transit. We need to keep going. That's why we need an investment strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The reality is, your government managed to find \$2 billion to pay connected eHealth consultants. You found another billion dollars to cancel two gas plants. Heck, you even found a couple of million dollars to buy Chris Mazza a speedboat.

Premier, based on your government's track record, surely you can find \$2 billion if you do the hard work of combing through the budget, if transit is truly one of your government's priorities.

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about what we actually need to do here. This is a \$50-billion plan. It's over a couple of decades in the future. We need to continue the building that is going on right now in the GTHA and we need to build out to that broader plan.

This is an annual investment that needs to be made, and the reality is that that kind of commitment has not been made in this province. We need now to recognize that our economic growth and our economic stability, quite frankly, are at stake, because every year we're losing billions of dollars in productivity by not having that transit in place.

We need to work on people's quality of life. We need to recognize that building transit affects people's daily lives, and that's why we need to make these investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, Premier, this is ultimately about your government's priorities. Over the last 10 years, you have consistently spent money on your partisan priorities and not those of the average Ontarian. Your government does not have a revenue problem; you've got a management problem.

It's time to do right by Ontarians. Show some leadership. Will you promise us and the people of Ontario today in this Legislature that you will not implement these new taxes, and you will do your job and find \$2 billion annually from the existing budget going forward?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This most certainly is about our priorities, and I am very proud of our priorities.

Our priorities are and have been to make sure that we deliver the services that people need every single day. Our priorities are making sure that we have the teachers in our schools that kids need; making sure that we have the doctors, the nurses, the nurse practitioners and the midwives that people need in their lives; and making sure that the infrastructure that has been neglected in this province for decades is built. I am proud of those priorities.

The reality is that this province has needed a dedicated plan for building transit and repairing and building infrastructure for years. They haven't had it. We're going to put it in place and we're going to provide that infrastructure that's needed in the future for the children and grandchildren in this province.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. In looking through the gas plant scandal treasury board documents last week, it would appear that your white-out team missed a few gems. In the House leader's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

In the House leader's notes for last year's budget meeting to buy the support of the NDP, the last sentence reads, "The proposals should be enough to avoid an election." That's your government's sole mission: to stay in power at all costs.

Premier, how can you find a billion dollars to buy NDP support, a billion dollars to cancel gas plants, a billion dollars to subsidize hydro bills and a billion dollars for eHealth consultants, but you can't find a billion dollars to build new subways and highways?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have found billions of dollars to invest in subways, in transit, in light rail and in roads and bridges across the GTHA and across the province. Every single year, we have invested billions of dollars in infrastructure.

Let me just be clear in terms of the work that we have done around the relocation of the gas plants and why I believe that being open and transparent is exactly what was necessary. And working in collaboration with the people in the Legislature—I ran my leadership on that. The notion that, somehow, working in collaboration with the opposition and working to put forward a budget that would allow us to continue to govern in a minority Parliament and continue to work with the folks across the floor—I think that's our responsibility.

It is what I said when I ran in the leadership. It is what we've been doing. We're going to continue to work with you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, for the cost of your gas plant scandal, which your own treasury board says will reach close to a billion dollars, you could have built the entire length of the Eglinton crosstown; or you could

have paid for 40 kilometres of dedicated bus rapid transit, connecting Burlington, Oakville and Mississauga with a BRT direct to Kipling.

In your \$127-billion budget, if you found just 2% of savings across the entire government, you would have \$2.5 billion a year. That's your \$2 billion for your Big Move and \$500 million left over to pay down debt.

Premier, we don't have a revenue problem in Ontario; you have a spending problem. Why do Liberals always default to new taxes to solve Ontario's problems?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

The member from Renfrew: nice and easy.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm talking to you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's an interesting line of questioning because the same line of questioning is used when the members opposite talk about investment in education. The same line of questioning is used when the members opposite ask about investment in health care, because the reality is that they would cut those services across the board.

We have been working very hard to constrain costs. We know that eliminating the deficit is extremely important. We're on track to do that by 2017-18.

In the interim, we cannot ignore the reality that if we are going to have the economic growth that we need, if we're going to be able to take our place in the global economy, we've got to invest in infrastructure, particularly in the GTHA, because we're losing productivity because of the lack of infrastructure. Making those investments in transit is the economically sound thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: London Economics International, a globally respected independent economic consultancy, said that your feed-in tariff program and green energy subsidies will cost \$46 billion. In other words, it's roughly the cost of the entire Big Move, yet it hasn't increased green energy production one bit.

How do you explain to Scarborough residents that you now need even more money from them, yet they still won't get subways? How do you explain to the people elsewhere in the GTHA that their energy bills will continue to skyrocket, their gas bills will go up, their HST will go up, all because of Liberal mismanagement?

Premier, on a personal note, how can you explain to the residents of northern Ontario that you can't afford Ontario Northland? Premier, how can Ontarians trust you with even one more nickel of their money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There was a lot in that question. I wouldn't know who to refer it to even if I was choosing to, so I will answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to speak to the issue of Ontario Northland because I want the people of North Bay and the people of northeastern Ontario to know that Minister Gravelle is working very hard to bring those northeastern voices into

the discussion around Ontario Northland. He has made a commitment that the advisory panel will look at what the options are and make sound decisions on that issue. I think that it's very good to have a question from the member opposite on the issue because it's important to me that we have a rational transportation plan for northern Ontario, northeastern and northwestern Ontario.

We need to invest in transit in the GTHA. There is no question about that. The members opposite are working to undermine that reality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, we'll start. The member from Halton is warned, and the member from Renfrew. Is that enough?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: All the questions so far from the members opposite have not acknowledged the reality that we need to build transit in the GTHA. We have to do that. There's really no debate about that, and we're working our level best to find a way to make those investments.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have been working hard to make life more affordable for people by giving FSCO a mandate to lower auto insurance rates by 15%.

Would the Premier agree that raising insurance rates by 30% before lowering them is not a measure that will make life more affordable for drivers in this province?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, we need to get the budget passed. There's no doubt about that, because we have said in the budget that we are going to work to reduce auto insurance premiums by 15%. We said we want to get on that right away. The reality is that until we get the budget passed, we can't implement the budget; I look forward to the debate on the budget, I look forward to moving ahead and being able to implement it.

A part of that is helping people in their day-to-day lives, and one aspect of that is lowering those insurance premiums. We want to get the budget through the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Susan Wright is a driver from Bramalea, and she just got her notice that her auto insurance premiums are going up by more than 30%. Her driving record has not changed. She hasn't had sudden accidents or claims on her insurance policy. She's one of several people who have contacted us about premiums that suddenly seem to be rising—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Northumberland, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —just as the government was finally forced to take some action—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland, come to order, please.

Please put the question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Premier explain to drivers like Susan why her government, right now, is approving massive increases at the same time as they're promising to provide a cut in rates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Rates have actually reduced by 0.3% year over year, since last year. What we're doing right now is we're asking FSCO to take controls and measures appropriately to ensure that rates do not go up.

The member opposite makes reference to a specific case, and I don't know the particulars of that individual, but I do know this: We need to get this budget passed. We need to ensure that we give FSCO the powers necessary. We need to provide legislation and provide the oversight that we all agree on, in order that we can reduce rates and in order that we also go after the root causes of the fraud that's also there. We're working toward that. We've taken the measures over the last two years to reduce some of that fraud. It has translated into certain reductions of some of the auto rates.

More needs to be done. I agree with the member opposite: We cannot allow rates to go up at this time. Let's get this budget passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's be clear: What needs to be done is that this government needs to tell the auto insurance industry that they can't put rates up. That's what needs to be done.

Families are justifiably skeptical. They have heard government promises to cut auto insurance premiums by 15%. At the same time—right now, Speaker—drivers are getting 30% increases on their renewals.

New Democrats want to make sure that good drivers pay less next year than they're paying today. Will the government commit to protecting drivers like Susan from increases before the decreases?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Of course we're committed; we put it in the budget. We made it clear that that's exactly what we want to do. We've already assessed the fact that rates have gone down on average, not up—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I have to go to the individuals immediately and do so, I've done it, and I will do it again. It is too much.

Answer, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Some of the measures that we're asking for are to appoint a review for any dispute resolutions, as the member opposite just made reference to. We want to continue in the definitions of certain impairments. We've already started discussions with a number of initiatives and stakeholders around the province. We want to make certain that claims are reviewed. It's part of our budget; it's part of our request.

We also know that, in our discussions with those insurance companies, we've been very direct in telling them to maintain the rates at what they are. They've actually been lowered, on average, by 0.3%.

We need to get this budget passed. We need to work together. Let's not make reference to one individual case that we don't know the particulars of. It's unfair for the member opposite to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you; that's enough. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. New Democrats have been very clear: We don't think it's fair to ask families to pay new tolls and taxes at the same time as the government is opening new tax loopholes for corporations.

I asked the Premier about whether she would work with Ottawa to close her new corporate tax loophole. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said, "We've had this discussion, and we're continuing to do so." What's the status of that discussion?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance will want to speak to the specifics of that contact with Ottawa. I think that the leader of the third party knows that we do not have full control over those mechanisms, which is why we have to work with Ottawa. That's why the letter has been written. I'll let the finance minister speak to those specifics.

But at the root of this question, again, is a question about whether the third party supports the building of transit in the GTHA. It seems to me that the members in that party understand very well how critical that infrastructure is to the economy of this region and also understand very well that the quality of life of the people who live in the GTHA—the moms who are trying to get their kids to school, to daycare and back home again, and the dads who are driving on the highway: They know that there needs to be a responsibility taken by government to make those investments. I hope the third party will work with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, what we understand very well over here is that the Premier is planning to open a brand new corporate tax loophole that will ensure that corporations can write the HST off on gasoline and other items. But on the other hand, she's musing about making families pay a new gasoline tax. Does the Premier think that's fair: that families should pay more and corporations should pay less yet again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really have to just say that we have said many, many times in this Legislature, both I and the Minister of Finance, that the characterization of that relationship on the tax regime with the federal government is just not accurate. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we have written to the federal government. We have said that we would like to extend the situation as it exists now. It is not a new loophole. It's not a loophole.

It's something that was negotiated with the federal government when we changed the tax system. We will continue to work with the federal government on this.

But I think the question that we do have to grapple with is, is the third party going to support the investment in transit in the GTHA? We know it's needed for people in their day-to-day lives. We know it's necessary for the economy. We need their support on that investment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's be clear about what this looks like. The Premier's new corporate tax loophole will make sure that if two cars roll up at the pump at the same time, the executive in the company car won't have to pay the HST, and the mom with the kids in the minivan will.

In fact, if the Premier goes forward with the gas tax, it means that the mom in the minivan is going to be paying more and more and more. The Premier is ready to ask families to pay more while she tells corporations to pay less. Does she really think that that's a balanced approach?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member opposite asked, let's be clear. And let us be clear: You're talking about restricted input tax credits. It's not a loophole, it's not a tax break, it's not a tax giveaway, and it's not new. We have written the Minister of Finance federally to extend that exception, as we all agree, in order for us to continue meeting our balance and in order for us to do what's necessary to protect the interest of our taxpayers. We agree that we want to have these extended, but we also recognize that it has to be in tandem with the federal government.

What's happening is, if they get a tax rebate—in 2017-18, because they're all relative to other different issues: It's not just vehicles, meals and entertainment; it's also telecommunications, and it's also in regard to energy. So all of this is coming up. We're asking them to have them extended. It's not a tax loophole.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. It took five years for Metrolinx to deliver a funding proposal for its transit plan. The best that they could do is to come up with a proposal to add \$2 billion in taxes on to the backs of Ontario taxpayers. We reject that proposal. Ontario families and businesses reject that proposal. Even the New Democrats reject that proposal. The Premier tells us she wants to have a conversation about adding \$2 billion of taxes to Ontario families and businesses.

Here is our proposal: While the Premier is having her conversation, will she agree to a select committee of this Legislature that has a mandate to find \$2 billion of savings out of the waste and inefficiency that is rampant throughout this government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please, and come to order. Start the clock.

Premier?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's an interesting question that's being asked from a member who—I could go through numerous decisions of the party opposite in power: the \$7-billion loss on the fire sale of the 407; the \$8 billion in stranded debt. There's \$15 billion that just comes to me like that. You guys majored in wasting money on a scale unprecedented by anybody who ever sat on this side of the House. We need no lessons from the members opposite on multi-billion-dollar disasters. We couldn't hold a candle to them if we tried.

Their record on transit and their neglect of it is legendary across North America. When they were in power you could not find a subnational government that so abandoned transit, which is so critical to young people and our jobs. They froze funding for GO transit, and the line-ups all along the Lakeshore line were legendary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: So much for a non-partisan approach to solving this problem.

Speaker, the budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Trying to understand the psychology of the situation, this is where I get the emails that often tell me, "Why don't you just throw the bums out?" And having the armchair quarterbacks advising me on how to do that—I'm not taking your advice because I honestly believe we can race to the top.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: I find the government's reaction to that comment very passing strange. It's the Premier who made the suggestion that we should be approaching this on a non-partisan basis. The budget of this government is \$127 billion. The waste is rampant; we all know that. One year it's eHealth. The next year it's Ornge. The year after, it's gas plants. We know—all of us in this place on all three sides of the House know—there is a great deal of inefficiency and waste.

I'm going to repeat my question to the Premier, not the Minister of Transportation. Will she agree to strike a select committee of this House with a mandate to find the waste and inefficiency of \$2 billion so that we can fund transit?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: If the party opposite and some of the members opposite who sat at the cabinet table can point, in their almost decade in power, to one single transit project they invested in, I will do a wave and clap for them, but they can't.

What we can point to is their brilliant record, which was to take bulldozers and fill in the Eglinton crosstown line and subway. That was their transit record. This is a party that most singlehandedly in government is responsible for the transit crisis we face today. No party in this Legislature has a worse record.

While the business community is begging the party opposite to engage in this conversation because of the \$6 billion they are losing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday, we heard from Dr. Jake Thiessen, the expert investigating the diluted chemo drugs. Dr. Thiessen talked about the fact that the outsourcing of drugs for use in hospitals has exploded in recent years, and he noted the lack of oversight and said he was worried. My question is simple: Is the minister worried about this contracting out of hospital drug preparation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What's vitally important is that we have the highest quality of drugs for all of our patients, and I think we would all agree that cancer patients in particular need to have the confidence that they are getting the drugs that have been prescribed for them, Speaker.

I am delighted that Dr. Thiessen has taken on this challenge to give us advice on the entire cancer drug supply chain. I think members of committee heard yesterday that he's taking that responsibility very, very seriously. He will be reporting back to us in coming weeks, and I look forward to seeing his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, Speaker, Dr. Thiessen said that in the past he wouldn't have been worried about the preparation of these drugs because most of this was being done in our hospitals, in a highly regulated environment. But as the for-profit industry exploded in Ontario, the needed oversight has not been provided by the Ministry of Health. Hospitals have been encouraged to move services out, to contract out, often to the for-profit industry, but this changes has not been properly done. Will the minister take her responsibility seriously and provide the comprehensive oversight that is her responsibility?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Absolutely. That oversight is essential. That is exactly why I have asked Dr. Thiessen to give us advice on how to ensure the safety of our cancer drugs, Speaker. I think he is a highly qualified person; I know he is a highly qualified person. He is doing his job thoroughly. I do not want to prejudice his findings. I think it's very important that we give him the time he needs to give us a thorough report, and then we will act on that.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday Metrolinx, the agency tasked with planning transit expansion in the GTHA, came out with their long-awaited investment strategy report. This report outlined their recommendations on how to pay for transit, and it also talked about the immense cost of congestion and gridlock to Ontarians. Many of my constituents in Brampton West can spend many hours in traffic

or on transit each day. I must say that many of them are very pleased to hear that building public transit is a priority for our government. We can all agree that there is a distinct need to reduce gridlock, improve air quality and build strong communities. Minister, please tell us why it's so important for us to move forward and invest in transit projects in the GTHA now.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member and our friends from Peel region for their support on this. Mr. Speaker, this is critical. I just want to stop and pause here and give a bit of reality on where we're going. We spend less per capita than any other province in Canada, so we have a lower envelope already for all of our basic services. No other jurisdiction—not British Columbia, not Alberta, not Quebec, not California, not Oregon, not Massachusetts—no one has built transit without raising some of these revenues. It has never happened. People who tell you that you can build a major regional transportation system without additional revenue are fibbing. And that's a polite word for it; my mother is probably watching.

If we don't do this, the business community alone and our residents will lose \$2.7 billion a year. That's the loss of summer jobs for their kids, it's lower household income, it's time away from families, and it's the impossibility of getting a job because if you don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —there's no bus to take you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister, for sharing some of the facts on the cost of gridlock to our economy.

The Metrolinx report recommended several revenue tools that should be used to fund new public transit expansion. Even though the cost of gridlock is estimated to be so high, and our transit system is in need of a dramatic expansion, some of my constituents want to know how some of the proposals might affect them. Now that the report by Metrolinx has been presented to the government, could the minister please tell us what the government's next steps are?

1110

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I was talking with my colleague Minister Jeffrey. It took her two hours and 15 minutes to get to work from Brampton today. We are the party in this House that thinks that's unacceptable. Her son Ryan would like to spend more time with his mom. She already is committed to a public life, which is taxing enough.

Minister Jeffrey's situation isn't any different. When I'm out in Oshawa and Ajax and Pickering, the chamber of commerce, the residents' association and the regional municipal politicians are saying, "Get this built."

We will make sure that we take as little additional revenue as absolutely possible. We are also understanding that the costs—that that \$6 billion is taxing Ontario families, and that's real money that they know is missing in opportunities and lower household income.

This government stands with the people of the GTHA to improve their quality of life, to let their moms spend—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in response to my question yesterday over the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, you announced you wanted to explore the possibility of creating local oversight boards at our jails. While I always welcome increased accountability, I also welcomed your 12-point action plan last August because you said it would solve the problems at EMDC. Almost a year later, the violence continues to escalate, threatening the safety of our correctional officers. Now you're saying, "Well, we actually need a local board that will oversee the implementation of such plans."

Minister, you have hundreds of ministry staff, dozens of managers at facilities province-wide and nearly 150 correctional officers at EMDC alone. How many more people do you need to do your job?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London for his comments, but his comments are not very appropriate. As I have said, the safety of our correctional officers and our inmates is my top priority.

In Elgin-Middlesex, we have always sent our best manager there. It's a difficult situation right now, and we are working very hard with the management there, with the union and with the correctional officers to improve the situation. We just implemented 24-hour nursing, and we have also just approved 11 new correctional officers. On this side of the House, I want to make sure the situation improves at Elgin-Middlesex correctional facility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, my comments are always appropriate when I'm standing up for my constituents.

At the end of the day, the buck does stop with you. Unfortunately, with the closure of the Bluewater, Owen Sound and Walkerton jails, overcrowding continues to put a strain on EMDC. When addressing these problems, you waited until receiving multiple lawsuits from inmates and pressure from myself and others to devise your 12-point action plan. You assured us it would work and restore safety to the jail. Then, after a year that included a near-riot, a fire and regular weekend lockdowns, you announced yesterday another plan to supposedly add more oversight. You keep tossing forward promises and back-of-the-envelope plans while maintaining that overcrowding is not the issue.

Minister, do you now regret closing the Bluewater, Owen Sound and Walkerton facilities?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we wanted to improve the situation in our correctional facilities and to close institutions that were built before Confederation. I'm not going to apologize for that.

We are working with the membership there to improve the situation, but one question that I need answered is, who is not doing his job when there are drugs going into the facility? Who is not doing his job when there is a knife going into the facility? That's something that I want answered and answered soon.

In the meantime, we are looking at appointing a new board that will help us to improve the situation there and to have also better communication with both the union and the community. Let's hope that we will see a major improvement soon in that facility.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it's clear that your government's OLG privatization plan is in chaos. You've fired the president and CEO of the OLG, Paul Godfrey, and the entire board of directors has subsequently resigned, yet you say that it's full steam ahead on this wrong-headed privatization scheme. Will the government admit that its OLG privatization strategy is a total mess and scrap this misguided plan once and for all?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question. What we're in the process of doing right now is, there is an interim chair and board in place. We have said quite clearly that there are aspects of the modernization strategy that need to go ahead—we want to have them go ahead—but there are some issues that we really feel need more focus.

One was the integration of the horse racing industry into the whole strategy—that was a point of divergence between us and the former chair of the board—and the issues around the fairness across the province. It was very important to us that whatever formula, whatever strategy was put in place, was even-handed in terms of its treatment of communities across the province. So those are issues that the new board will be working on. We all recognize that there have to be changes in terms of the OLG and a modernization process, but we want those two principles to be in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's time for this government to admit that it has a gambling problem: It's addicted to the revenues that it thinks will pour in from privatizing the OLG. But the government should know that the first step in addressing this failure is admitting that you have a problem in the first place. The fact is that it's very unlikely that the projected revenues will ever materialize. Will this government finally admit that it has a problem and scrap this misguided privatization plan once and for all?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is interesting, that question coming from the party that brought casinos to the province of Ontario. In terms of that revenue stream, the reality is that that revenue stream is part of the revenue that goes into the provincial treasury to pay for schools and hospitals, and it's very important money. We recognize that, but we have to make sure that the industry

functions responsibly and functions in a way that is consistent with the principles that we hold.

I have been very clear that having the horse racing industry as part of the gaming strategy, I think, is going to lead to a more sustainable horse racing industry across the province. That was the recommendation of the transition panel, and that is the recommendation that we are going to be operating on. So we need leadership at the OLG that is going to implement that part of the strategy. I look forward to that work.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Minister, our government recently tabled its 2013 budget, a budget about creating jobs and helping people in their everyday lives. We've put together a strong plan to help people across the province, and this plan will create jobs and give all Ontarians the chance they need to succeed.

One of the key elements in our plan is to work with businesses to expand markets for Ontario goods and services beyond the borders of our province so that Ontario businesses can access high-growth markets so that they can go global.

Could the minister please inform this House what this government is doing to expand its global economic presence and strengthen Ontario's capacity for innovation and job creation right here at home?

1120

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his question. I'm pleased to inform the House of a recent announcement our government has made to support innovative businesses and capitalize on emerging opportunities within the global economy.

Last week, I visited the riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex to announce support from the Ontario government's Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to standing side by side with the local member, the MPP from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. I invited him to the announcement, and I was, as I mentioned, looking forward to standing side by side, but I was forced to make this announcement on my own.

This investment has helped to attract an investment of nearly \$3.5 million from Armo Tool, a company specializing in advanced manufacturing. This investment will enable Armo to expand its exports by a third. It will help create and retain 139 jobs.

It's investments like these that generate the kind of growth that helps us compete, not only in the short term, but in the long term.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thank you for that response. It's good to hear that our government's plan to help create jobs while promoting Ontario on the global stage is working.

While it's good to see that the manufacturing sector is developing and that there are many new technologies, we need to make sure Ontario has a competitive edge with

these new technologies so that we can compete in the global marketplace.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, could the minister please tell the House how Ontario is helping these new technologies thrive and gain that competitive edge in the global marketplace?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, it is true: Ontario needs to help businesses compete on the global stage. In fact, I'd say we have a responsibility as a government to do this. That's why one of my ministry's efforts is on the water sector market, which is a global market that is growing at a very, very rapid pace. Water shortage is becoming—it already is—a global issue due to increasing population, economic growth and climate change. Ontario, we all know, is blessed with incredible freshwater resources, so we have a strong competitive advantage in the burgeoning blue economy.

Last week, I visited with the team at Anderson Water Systems and with Minister McMeekin in his riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. We announced a funding partnership that will contribute to Ontario's blue economy and help Anderson Water Systems to expand their water treatment facilities, allowing them to expand their exports all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, our support for Anderson Water Systems is just another testament to our government's commitment to a sustainable and prosperous economy.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday I brought to your attention that you have put 25,000 contact call centre jobs at risk across Ontario due to your rushed decision to cancel the apprenticeship tax credit. This Liberal-NDP budget decision will kill thousands of jobs without any consultation.

Premier, yesterday I spoke with Alliance iCommunications in downtown London. Sadly, with this decision, Alliance is being forced to consider relocating their business and their 300 jobs to the United States. With 600,000 men and women out of work, why are you and the NDP so determined to drive businesses and jobs out of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, again, for the question from across the way. We recognize how important it is to have the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit in the past to promote those initiatives, which will stimulate employment and enable those apprentices to have full-time jobs. The fact is, it's not happening with regard to call centres.

However, call centres are still eligible for other provincial apprenticeship trade programs. Employers of call centre apprentices are eligible to up to \$1,000 bonuses for each apprentice who receives and completes their training and receives their certification.

We've also introduced, in our budget, \$195 million for a youth employment fund to enable those companies to

hire some of our young people, to provide those skills and enable them to have full-time employment as well.

We want to work, and I believe the members across are also supportive of recommendations made by Drummond. This is one of them. He's recognized that some of these investment tax credits are not doing their full extent. We want to do the right thing. We want to employ people. We want to stimulate that growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Premier, North Bay has an 11.3% unemployment rate, and you are putting up to 800 jobs at risk there. London has a 10% unemployment rate, the highest of the big cities in Canada. You are putting thousands of jobs at risk in London at places like Alliance iCommunications. Windsor has a 9.3% unemployment rate—a little better than London, but still failing badly under the McGuinty-Wynne-Horwath government, and you're putting good jobs at risk there too.

Premier, was the decision to kill the apprenticeship tax credit and risk up to 25,000 important jobs your decision, or was it forced upon you by your NDP puppet masters?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I go to the answer, I'm going to ask the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to come together. If there's a continuation of the dialogue, I'm going to ask you to look up the old British way of saying, "Take it outside."

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite also should be aware that we highlighted these initiatives in the 2012 budget. We recognized and asked those very companies to come forward with more advancements and to be more productive in terms of supporting those employees.

We also want to make reference to the fact that these tax credits existed—came into being—prior to us making substantive tax reductions for corporates, making tax reforms to make them even more competitive. We want to ensure that the environment in which these businesses operate is a competitive environment but also is to the benefit of those employees and those individuals.

We want these companies to stay in Ontario; we want these companies to provide and to serve. But we want the people who are being employed to get the benefit of why we're investing in them, and that's not occurring at this point, so we want to take the proper steps going forward.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The MPP for London–Fanshawe wrote a letter to the Premier's Minister of Correctional Services three weeks ago, asking her to provide a progress report about dangerous conditions at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. Instead of progress, we learned that another correctional services officer was attacked—in fact, stabbed in the head—over the weekend at the EMDC. To this day, the minister has still not responded to the letter that was sent by the member for London–Fanshawe.

Will the Premier take real and immediate action to protect the lives of workers and inmates in Ontario jails immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: In my ministry, we answer all letters in a most speedy way. I don't know—I'm not aware of when this letter was sent, but I'll make sure that we answer the letter.

As I said previously, the health and safety of both our correctional officers and our inmates are my priority. I've been working very diligently with my deputy minister and the ministry staff to improve the situation there. We have developed a 12-point plan, and we are in the process of putting it into action. Also, we have now the 24-hour nursing, as it was required, which is good progress. We have approved the hiring of 11 new correctional officers.

In the supplementary, I'll go on to express what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the letter was sent three weeks ago, Speaker. Perhaps if it was speedily dealt with, this injury could have been avoided this past weekend.

The Elgin-Middlesex jail is just the tip of the iceberg, unfortunately. In the last three days, four correctional officers have been stabbed in jails in Ontario: two in Niagara; one in Maplehurst, in Milton; and one in London.

Dangerous conditions in jails across the province continue to endanger the lives of workers and inmates, yet your minister cannot find the time to take action to actually correct the problems.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There seems to be some giggling on the other side, Speaker. It's quite disconcerting.

Premier, will you take action immediately to secure Ontario jails for the safety of the workers and the inmates who are there?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We have improved the situation there. I know that these incidents are unfortunate, and it's unfortunate when a correctional officer is being attacked and hurt. We take it very, very seriously.

But the question remains—I'm told that they have improved the situation there by making sure that they do their rounds, that everybody who comes in is investigated to make sure that they don't have drugs, they don't have matches, they don't have lighters, they don't have knives. But the question remains, and I asked my staff to answer the question as to why this is happening, whose fault it is and who should make sure that this does not happen, to make sure that the other correctional officers are safe when they are working in the institution.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order.

1130

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This spring has been

specifically devastating for many municipalities across the province that have experienced severe flooding. Homes and businesses have been damaged or destroyed in places such as Minden Hills, Markstay-Warren and Moosonee. This flooding has resulted in significant damage to municipal infrastructure, but has also meant that many Ontarians have lost their possessions and their homes.

Can the minister tell us what the government is doing to help the people of Ontario who have experienced flooding and may have lost their homes?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. This has been an extraordinarily difficult spring for a number of municipalities across Ontario, and I want to extend my condolences to those individuals who have lost possessions, their homes or their businesses during the flooding.

I want to recognize the hard work of the residents, staff and first responders in some of the affected communities: in Bracebridge, Huntsville, Bancroft, Kawartha Lakes, Minden Hills, South Algonquin, Markstay-Warren, Ramara and Moosonee. I want to offer them my heartfelt thanks for all of their hard work.

I've had the opportunity to meet with the mayor of Bracebridge and the mayor of Huntsville, and I've seen first-hand the devastating impact the flooding has had on their communities. That's why, last week, our government committed up to \$18 million through the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program to help those affected communities across central, eastern and northern parts of Ontario. The money will help them clean up, repair their homes and small businesses and rebuild essential municipal infrastructure like bridges and roads.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister; it's good to hear that there is action being taken to help rebuild after these devastating floods.

When disasters like this happen, families are often caught off-guard, and they often lose many of their possessions, in addition to their homes. Families and individuals are in desperate need to replace essential items like clothing, shelter, food or medicine, some of the basic items that we take for granted but are essential items that every Ontarian needs to continue to live their lives.

Can the minister tell us if there are any new initiatives being taken to assist those who may have lost so much because of the recent flooding in their community?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member for the question because it's one that has been raised with me before. While committing the \$18 million to help communities rebuild, we've also been working hard to help those affected Ontarians recover from the disaster. Affected municipalities and their appointed disaster relief committees can give interim payments to residents of up to \$1,000 to help them begin the process of recovery.

Moreover, if an individual is in need of immediate financial need, they may be eligible to receive emergency assistance through Ontario Works. This emergency assistance gives individuals immediate financial assistance they need because of a crisis or an emergency situ-

ation such as flooding. The amount provided may include money for basic needs such as food, shelter or clothing.

I want to reassure all those affected that our government continues to work with our municipal partners to help residents in all the affected municipalities recover.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, over the last decade, the Liberal government is responsible for chasing 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of the province. Your budget even shows that you've tried to make up for this loss by adding hundreds of thousands of public-sector jobs to the government payroll.

Now your government is threatening even more manufacturing jobs by trying to get rid of the industrial exception. I've heard loud and clear from manufacturers across the Quinte region that this is a serious concern for them—not just keeping jobs, but it's threatening the closure of these facilities as well.

Premier, will you get off the back of the manufacturers of the province and stop trying to make government the only growth industry in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know that the member spoke to his chamber of commerce about this last week, so I appreciate the heads-up on the question.

As I've already indicated to the member from Dufferin—Peel—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Caledon.

Hon. John Gerretsen:—Caledon, Dufferin—Caledon, a couple of weeks ago, I was not satisfied with the overall consultation that took place. We have therefore put the matter on hold. We are doing our own consultation within the ministry right now, dealing with the industrial exemptions that have been on the books since 1984, and we will be dealing with this issue before the first of September.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The last thing the manufacturers in the Quinte area need is more consultation from this government. It's consultation that's going to lead to a strategy that's probably never going to be implemented. This government, with the help of their NDP farm team, is killing manufacturing across Ontario. A Trenton VP of a manufacturing facility wrote you and me, Minister, saying that currently they estimate the cost of doing business in Ontario is 30% higher than the rest of Canada. She estimates that if this exception, which, as you say, has been in place for almost 30 years—it will add another 30% or more to the cost of doing business.

Manufacturers need room to innovate. They need less red tape, not more. They need the competitive advantage that this exception gives Ontario.

Premier, either keep the industrial exception for the manufacturers in place or tell the workers that are working today that you're not interested in keeping jobs in Ontario.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll refer the matter to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to say, it continues to be disappointing that the official opposition—the only role that they take is to berate and beat down our manufacturers and our businesses that are working so hard across this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you carry on, you won't have a chance to say it. The Attorney General will come to order. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will come to order. The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order. The next ones are warnings or out.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that when you look at the facts, we've created over 400,000 jobs since the bottom of the recession. For our manufacturers alone, April was one of the best months, and 9,000 new manufacturing jobs were created in this province. When you look back at the 400,000 jobs created, 97% of those jobs are full-time positions. More than half of them are in the private sector.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Eight years after the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed, people with disabilities continue to be denied service at restaurants and stores in cities like Toronto and Windsor. Advocates fear the government is failing to properly implement and enforce the act. In fact, the law requires the minister appoint an independent review panel by May 31 to review implementation of the act and get Ontario back on schedule for full accessibility. Has he done that?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for this very relevant and important question. I know she is as proud as I am of the AODA, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, that was passed in this Legislature in 2005. In fact, Ontario was one of the first jurisdictions, as she knows, in the world to actually go from a complaints-based regime to a more proactive regulatory regime. We reviewed, as was required under the legislation, several years ago—I think the report was presented in 2010. The reviewer at that time was Charles Beer. I'm happy, in the supplementary as well, to talk specifically about what his recommendations were and how we've moved on both those and the specific question that the member opposite asked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I repeat: The minister is to appoint an independent review panel by May 31 and he has not done that. In effect, this government is breaking

its own law. It has in fact also promised to effectively enforce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and it's not doing that, either. Companies with more than 20 employees are supposed to have reported their customer service policies to the ministry by now. But the minister won't say how many companies actually filed these mandatory reports.

Why is the minister refusing to provide this basic information and breaking the law by not setting up the independent review?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, as the member opposite has indicated, the AODA requires a review every three years. When reviewed back in 2010, again, Charles Beer, a very outstanding reviewer, actually recommended strongly that we delay the next review until the spring of 2014. Mr. Speaker, we're not going to do that. We've decided that this is important and that we're going to review this this year. We're in the process of determining the scope of that review, again, based on Charles Beer's recommendations in 2010. So we're actually moving faster than his recommendations to do this, to appoint a reviewer, to determine the scope.

I look forward to having an announcement in the very near future.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd ask all members to welcome Mr. Matthew Thornton, who's in the Speaker's gallery today. Matthew served all parties in this House as a former legislative page and is currently on the staff of the Ontario Real Estate Association. Welcome, Matthew.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the Legislature would indulge me, I'd like to introduce the Ho family: dad Frederick and mom Lin Ho; daughters Larissa, Stephanie and Eliza; and son Mathias. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I turn to the member from Cambridge, I'll correct the record, because he was my intern, too. So he was an intern. Thank you.

The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: In keeping with the theme of these points of order, I recognize that Professor Hank Jaczek is here today with his graduate class from McMaster University, who are here to learn about government and politics in Ontario. I look forward to talking with him later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, I did this earlier, but I'd like to recognize yet another Michael Harris who did work here at Queen's Park. He and his class are here from OSCVI.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2012 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO AGRI-FOOD EDUCATION INC.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize Ontario Agri-Food Education, better known as OAFE.

Food literacy is not a new concept. OAFE evolved from government into a not-for-profit supported by commodity organizations in 1991, with the mission of building awareness and understanding of the importance of an agriculture and food system. OAFE provides high-quality agriculture- and food-related learning materials to Ontario teachers.

With the growing interest in healthy eating and local food, OAFE is here to ensure that the message of agri-food education is technically edgy and relevant, to stick out in the classrooms across the province. But it's going to take a culture shift, a shift that delivers food learning from the traditional classroom into grocery store classrooms, a shift that also combines the excitement of agricultural careers into every high school discussion about future jobs. As the premier learning connection between agriculture and education, OAFE is uniquely positioned to address these challenges. By educating students about food and farming, OAFE creates a deeper interest in and connection with food.

The member for Perth—Wellington and I are pleased to be joining executive director Colleen Smith, her team, dedicated teachers and ambassadors as OAFE will be kicking off the annual National Agriculture in the Classroom conference, which is hosted in Ontario this year and kicks off tonight.

OAFE paves the way, and now it's up to us to continue on this path. That is why I am proud of my colleague from Nepean—Carleton and my colleague from Oxford for putting forward an amendment to make food literacy mandatory.

PRABHDEEP SRAWN

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My prayers are with the friends and family of Prabhdeep Srawn of Brampton, who is currently missing in Australia. Prabhdeep is a Canadian Forces reservist and law student who disappeared more than two weeks ago in the remote backcountry of Australia's Snowy Mountains. Australian authorities have recently announced they're scaling back on search efforts and will cease completely in two days.

Prabhdeep has an increased chance of survival because of his extensive army training and experience in

hiking, but we must help him by utilizing whatever resources we have. Family and friends have organized a campaign to pressure the Canadian and Australian authorities to strengthen the search effort. An online petition urging the commitment of more resources to the search has garnered over 7,000 signatures as of Sunday night.

I thank our federal NDP counterparts and leader, Tom Mulcair, who wrote to Prime Minister Harper; as well as the foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar, who sent a letter to Minister John Baird; and all others who have urged our government to put pressure on Australia to deploy more resources towards the search. I want to urge our Premier and the leader of the official opposition to also reach out to their federal counterparts to add their voices to this request as well.

Prabhdeep proudly serves his country, being part of the Canadian Forces, and now he needs his country's help. I ask everyone to call your MP, requesting the Canadian government to continue to apply pressure on the Australian government to increase the scope and length of the search for Prabhdeep.

It's my hope that by applying international pressure, we can encourage the Australian military as well as the state emergency services to increase resources and intensify the search, to bring Prabhdeep home to his family safe and sound.

STREETSVILLE BREAD AND HONEY FESTIVAL

Mr. Bob Delaney: Volunteers and residents in Streetsville are ready for the 41st annual event that marks the start of summer in Mississauga: Streetsville's Bread and Honey Festival. This year's Bread and Honey will be celebrating a homecoming theme, a time for old friends to return to Streetsville and to make new friends.

I will have my booth at the Vic Johnston arena on Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., to talk local issues with western Mississauga residents and visitors.

Mayor McCallion, councillor George Carlson and I will be serving pancakes at the Rotary pancake breakfast on Sunday from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Vic Johnston arena hall.

There will be a talented lineup of live performers.

Councillor Carlson is hoping for good weather for his annual fishing derby on the banks of the Credit River this Sunday at 9 a.m.

Local arts and crafts will be offered for sale by artisans and businesses, both local and from across Ontario.

Throughout the Bread and Honey Festival, visitors can enjoy fresh slices of bread covered in sweet honey.

Come and enjoy the legendary Streetsville hospitality at the 2013 Bread and Honey Festival. Find out more at breadandhoney.ca.

RIDING OF WELLINGTON–HALTON HILLS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, last week was constituency week, and I was glad to be in Wellington–

Halton Hills, in my riding office and out and about in the communities I'm privileged to represent.

There are so many issues that compel an appropriate response from this government.

The Halton Catholic District School Board is urging the Ministry of Education to approve a replacement for Holy Cross school in Georgetown. I've been asked to support this project, and I do. Now it's up to the Minister of Education to support it as well.

The Oppose Belwood Wind Farm Association recently received the environmental excellence award from the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce. With this award, our community recognizes and appreciates the work that the association is doing to highlight the risks associated with industrial wind farms. I continue to call upon the government to place a moratorium on new wind farm approvals until ongoing health studies are completed. Now it's up to the Minister of the Environment to do the same.

The cancellation of the Connecting Link program, without reasonable consultation with municipalities, is a massive download of the costs of maintaining provincial highways through built-up communities. I have heard about the problems this will cause in the town of Halton Hills and the township of Centre Wellington. We support the reinstatement of the Connecting Link program or a suitable and equivalent replacement. It's up to the Minister of Transportation to do the same.

And then we have the physio fiasco that I heard about when I visited an area nursing home, as this government plans to cut physiotherapy services to residents of long-term-care homes. I support our seniors receiving the physiotherapy services they need. Now it's up to the Minister of Health to do the same.

I urge the government to begin listening to the people of Wellington–Halton Hills.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Last spring, this government closed three travel information centres in my riding without notice or consultation, claiming that they were replacing these vital centres with a travel app that it said would be better designed to meet travellers' needs.

Speaker, the reviews are in. The Dryden Observer says the ministry's app is "entirely useless.... It is so shockingly devoid of regionally relevant information as to actually be humorous."

The newspaper continues: "The entire app is centred around events, festivals and other broad strokes which run contrary to the kind of experience destination travellers are seeking in the northwest."

Speaker, this government is grossly out of touch when it comes to tourism in the northwest and its importance to our local economy.

The latest insult is proposed changes to zone 5 fishing regulations that would reduce non-residents'—our tourists—daily catch limit from four to two. This move would drastically hurt camp owners' ability to attract business and may even force some to close shop.

Speaker, I understand the need to protect fish stocks, but the MNR is a ministry designed to prevent these things from happening, and they have clearly failed to do so.

This government needs to go back to the drawing board and return with a plan that does not penalize hard-working residents of northwestern Ontario for this government's own failed policies.

FORT ERIE RACE TRACK

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to rise in the House today with great pride in my riding of Fort Erie. I'm very proud to say that this past Sunday marked the 116th opening of the Fort Erie Race Track. This opening day was met by one of the largest crowds in the past 15 years, demonstrating not only support from the community for the sport of horse racing but, as I witnessed first-hand, the diversity of the people and age groups and backgrounds all participating in this historic sport as friends and patrons and customers.

I could not be more proud of the not-for-profit community-based corporation, Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium, that has been able for the past four years to keep this track operating efficiently, effectively and successfully. This is the only such board constructed of horsemen, town, economic development agency and union representation.

Sunday was not only record attendance but also had increased revenues from wagering and on-track product sales.

I'm equally proud of the support of this Legislature and this government in the efforts of modernizing racing in Ontario—starting with the leadership of Premier Wynne, the tripartite panel of past ministers working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and rural Ontario on a fast-track basis towards a more sustainable future for horse racing in Ontario and keeping Fort Erie alive and kicking.

I also am so proud of all of the employees of the racetrack, and the horsemen who made this day so spectacular.

Fort Erie is alive and kicking.

1510

TOWN OF ORANGEVILLE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to rise today to recognize the town of Orangeville as it celebrates its 150th birthday. Throughout 2013, Orangeville will be commemorating its incorporation—which occurred on December 22, 1863, thanks to its founder and namesake, Orange Lawrence—with the main event being a large celebration on July 6.

Since its incorporation, Orangeville has grown from a small village to a thriving town. With humble beginnings as a mill community surrounded by dense forest, Orangeville has witnessed many changes but has always retained much of its history in the many homes that are historical and founding buildings.

As you tour around Orangeville, you can see the present seamlessly mixed with the past. From the storefronts on Broadway to the town hall, the old fire station, the Orangeville library and the beautifully preserved Victorian- and Gregorian-inspired homes on Zina, Bythia and Elizabeth streets, Orangeville's rich heritage is very well preserved.

Orangeville is a busy hub within the county of Dufferin. Throughout its colourful history, our community has been home for a number of fascinating historical figures such as Falkner Stewart, a local merchant and representative for Dufferin in the Ontario Legislature, and Minerva Ellen Reid, who became the first female chief of surgery in North America in 1915.

While the past 150 years are being honoured, it is the present-day residents of Orangeville who are most proud to call this dynamic town home.

HALTON FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak about Halton Food for Thought. That's an organization that operates in Halton region. It promotes the connection between healthy food and improved learning. I recently had the opportunity to attend a breakfast event to celebrate their outstanding efforts.

Food for Thought started as an advisory committee in 1997. At that time, only six schools had nutritional programs in all of Halton region. This organization has since grown, under the leadership of Gayle Cruikshank and others, to more than 130 nutrition programs, and now they have close to 100 sites. More than 1,000 volunteers help more than 22,000 students.

The programs range from full breakfast programs to class snack programs to providing lunches for students who arrive at school, unfortunately, without food. There is also an emphasis on local food through the Farm to School Program, which partners with GTA farms and the Edible Garden Project.

Because we all know that students arriving at school hungry simply do not perform well in the classroom, I'd like to say thank you and applaud Halton Food for Thought and the many volunteers in the community who are helping to promote healthy eating options and better learning opportunities for our students. It's people like this in local communities who make Ontario the great province that it is.

PHYSICIAN APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yesterday marked the ninth annual Physician Appreciation Day in my riding. I'm pleased to rise, alongside the Alliston and Area Physician Recruitment Committee, and the community in general, to recognize and thank our many physicians for their dedication to health and wellness throughout the area.

For decades, the Physician Recruitment Committee has been working diligently to find ways to attract and retain new physicians to Stevenson Memorial Hospital and the area it serves. The committee was the second in

the province to host a Physician Appreciation Day. In fact, the province itself has now taken notice of their success and followed suit by declaring a similar province-wide Doctor Day, held annually on May 1.

Thanks to the efforts of the Alliston and Area Physician Recruitment Committee, on this day physicians are honoured with flowers, gifts and praise from patients and the community, who want to show their gratitude. It's a day when we all come together and give thanks to our physicians for the job that they do. When we're healthy, physicians help keep us that way, and when we're sick, they're the ones we depend on to make us well. Physicians are critical to our lives and are especially valued in our community for their efforts and dedication to a small-town hospital in a rural area.

As a former Minister of Health, I have a great appreciation for the work that physicians do. I also know that the people of south Simcoe are truly appreciative of their commitment to our area and its people.

As MPP for Simcoe-Grey, I am tremendously grateful to our local physicians, and I would like to thank them for their tremendous and continued contribution to our community.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the custom, I'd like to recognize a former member here at the House, the former MPP for York East in the 35th Parliament, Gary Malkowski, who is in the visitors' gallery, in the west gallery up here. Gary, welcome.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment for a point of order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, this week is National Access Awareness Week, and I believe we have unanimous consent that during statements by the ministry and responses today, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent for the interpreters to be on the floor of the Legislature. Do we agree? Agreed.

Thank you, and that is at ministers' statements time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (CELIAC DISEASE SCREENING), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (DÉPISTAGE DE LA MALADIE COELIAQUE)

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act with respect to celiac disease screening / *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé en ce qui concerne le dépistage de la maladie coeliaque.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bill Mauro: The bill, Speaker, if passed, would expand OHIP coverage for serological tests for celiac disease. Celiac disease affects nearly 1% of Canada's population, and the condition causes the immune system to react negatively to gluten in the diet, which can result in damage to the person's small bowel, reducing their ability to absorb nutrients. This can lead to vitamin deficiencies that deprive the person's brain, peripheral nervous system, bones, liver and various organs of vital nourishment.

The disease—and this is important—has also been associated with type 1 diabetes, Down syndrome, thyroiditis, arthritis, depression, infertility, osteoporosis and other serious health conditions. By increasing access to these tests within the community, more people will be able to obtain an early diagnosis and treatment of celiac disease, which increases the chances that damaged tissue will heal and reduces the likelihood of long-term and serious health complications.

WORKERS' DEATH BENEFITS PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PRESTATIONS DE DÉCÈS DES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to protect benefits for spouses of deceased, retired workers / *Projet de loi 76, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail afin de protéger les prestations versées aux conjoints des travailleurs retraités décédés.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: The Workers' Death Benefits Protection Act amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997 to provide that if a deceased worker was diagnosed with an occupational disease after he or she retired, the deceased worker's net average earnings shall, for the purpose of calculating death benefits, be determined as of the date of the deceased worker's last exposure to the biological, chemical or physical agent that caused the death of the worker.

1520

I want to thank you, Speaker Levac, for your wisdom, your guidance and for your insight into this particular bill; J.P. Mrochek, for his advocacy; Tara Blondeau, who is in the audience, for her very hard work; but most importantly, the widows I have met with, for providing empirical evidence that this amendment is very, very important.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, please allow me first to introduce some guests in the House today. Joining us today in the public gallery, I'm pleased to introduce: Dean Walker from the Ontario Association of the Deaf; Lori Archer, also from the Ontario Association of the Deaf; Gordon Ryall, from the Canadian Hearing Society; Gary Malkowski, who you introduced already and who of course is a former MPP, currently with the Canadian Hearing Society; and Mr. John Hendry, who is an author.

I'd also like to welcome all viewers who were not able to attend today but who are watching the broadcast proceedings.

Sunday marked the beginning of National Access Awareness Week. It's a time for the people of this province to reflect and act on our shared goal of making Ontario truly accessible. And, of course, it's a time for us to celebrate the work accomplished since this Legislature passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in 2005.

Ontario is one of the first regions in the world to take a proactive approach to accessibility. We have developed standards for customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment and the design of public spaces. These standards are now in place. We are developing new ones, and we are well on our way to achieving an accessible Ontario by 2025.

We have accomplished much, but there is still much more work to be done.

In the speech from the throne, our government announced that we would move the Accessibility Directorate to the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

As the minister now leading our government's efforts to make Ontario more accessible and inclusive, I would like to take this opportunity to state clearly and unequivocally that accessibility is a top priority for me, for my ministry and for our government. We now have an opportunity to begin, in a serious and deliberate way, to look at issues of greater accessibility and inclusion through an employment lens. What does this mean? It means that the goal of greater accessibility must be integrated into all that we do as a ministry, and I have instructed my ministry to do just that. This is something our government is strongly committed to.

In our efforts to work with business across the province to create jobs, we must also work to improve the participation rate for people with disabilities in the workforce. It's the right thing to do, and it makes economic sense, because if our economy is to be vibrant, if we are to thrive and if our society is to be truly fair, all Ontarians must have the opportunity to contribute. Many businesses understand this. There are numerous examples of employers who get the economic case for hiring people with disabilities—an economic and business case that has been demonstrated in study after study.

But as a ministry and as a society, we must do more to help employers understand that business case and to improve access to employment. We must do that in our conversations with business and through robust public education.

Talk is important, but it will only get us so far. We need action. So I have instructed my ministry to develop a strategy for accessible and inclusive employment so that we can all work together to improve the participation rate of Ontarians with disabilities in the workforce.

One way we have started is by ensuring that voices from the accessibility community will be heard at the youth jobs round tables taking place across the province in the coming weeks.

I'm excited to work with employers and the accessibility community, not only to raise the profile of the issue of employment, but to take action and to get results. But if we are to get results, accessibility can't be seen as the work of only one minister. We can't accomplish our goal of full accessibility when we work in silos. So I will be working with my colleagues across government to further the cause of greater accessibility through activities like the social assistance review and the Pan and Parapan Am Games. And within government, we must work to remove any remaining barriers.

There are also opportunities that we must seize in the area of business and especially trade. Because of our province's commitment to accessibility and inclusion, we have a thriving business sector producing goods and services for people with disabilities. I saw this yesterday at the Ontario Centres of Excellence Discovery conference, where I presented awards to young innovators who have come up with new goods and services that will make our communities more inclusive and more accessible.

As we encourage companies to go global with their products, we must do the same for companies producing goods and services focused on accessibility.

Through these and other measures, we will build on the results that we've already achieved, including through the five accessibility standards we've introduced, but we will also ensure that these standards are having the best possible impact.

We will be asking the new combined Accessibility Standards Advisory Council/Standards Development Council to review the customer service standard as a first order of business. I'm pleased to say that members of the new council have been invited and are enthusiastically signalling their acceptance. We look forward to announcing the committee members very, very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of what we have achieved. We should all, as a Legislature and as a province and as a society, be proud of what we have achieved together. I am proud of what we will achieve as we work toward a fully accessible, inclusive Ontario by 2025.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries.

It is now time for responses.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we've just heard, it has now been eight years since this Ontario government followed the lead of the PCs with the PC government's Ontarians with Disabilities Act—in this case, with the passage of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. While in some ways we've moved forward, many disabled advocates are wondering if lately we haven't just been spinning our wheels.

With one in seven in Ontario living with a disability—it's a number projected to be one in five within the next two decades—there is an understanding among all of the vital need in this case to ensure Ontario's buildings and services are open and accessible to all residents.

In recent years, we've been told of the implementation of the AODA's customer service standard. We see troubling stories continuing to come to the fore, reinforcing the need to get this plan back on track.

The Windsor Star reported recently of a local retail outlet restricting access to the store by a patron using a motorized chair. As they reported, the store's staff did not want people in motorized wheelchairs in the store; they were concerned they would damage products that were there for sale.

Just two weeks before that, the Toronto Star reported a Toronto restaurant restricting access to a patron with hearing loss who was using a hearing ear dog. The patron and two friends having lunch were reportedly told they'd have to sit outside or sit upstairs because of this dog that was at work and were also told that either he or the dog could go outside.

So there remains a disconnect, Speaker. Government has talked the game, but when it comes to accessibility, many of the early returns are far from convincing.

For instance, where are we on the compliance of the five standards to support the act? The customer service accessibility standard required organizations and businesses to file reports of their plans—plans for compliance with the standard—as well, a written accessibility policy. All private sector organizations of 20 or more employees were supposed to submit this by December 31 of last year. So questions remain: How many of these have been filed? How many have not? The bottom line? Will there be enforcement of this act or is the act destined to become somewhat of a toothless tiger?

1530

Disability advocates are calling on the government for effective enforcement of the act—for the standard in place now and for anything coming down the road. They're waiting for government to meet the act's requirements for mandatory review. Again, when exactly will members be appointed to the mandatory Accessibility

Standards Advisory Council, so the mandatory review of the customer service accessibility standard can get under way? When will the appointment be announced for the next independent review of the AODA? Again, government is required to make appointments by May 31. It's now May 28; time is running out. The concern remains that while days pass by, government's commitment to accessibility and enforcement to ensure that accessibility seems to be growing weaker.

You know, Speaker, words like “access” and “accessibility” mean much more than just removing barriers. They mean a change in attitude and supports that allow all disabled—all of those with mobility, sensory, non-visible and intellectual disabilities—to be part of community life, and obviously work life. We all understand that required change for accessibility is not going to be brought in overnight, and the truth is, it never will be brought about without the commitment and, importantly, enforcement of government to ensure that these goals are reached.

Speaker, we await progress towards the standards for employment, for transportation, information, communication; it's so important. We ask government to get on at least with the one standard that is in place and back up the words with action. Get on with the job of creating accessibility for those of us in the province of Ontario who have disabilities.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In fact, this government is in breach of the law where their own law is concerned. The review that you heard my colleague speak about that's due this week, the 31st, when I asked the minister about it in question period this morning, he had no answer. He's not going to do it. That's breaking the law—breaking the law where people with disabilities are concerned. That independent review panel was said to be struck and was asked to be struck. It won't be struck; it's not happening.

What's also not happening? The backdrop to these comments: 23,000 people in Ontario—more than anywhere else in Canada—languish on lists waiting for services. A hundred and fifty families, according to the Ombudsman in 2005, and it's worse since then, had to give up their children—their children—with disabilities because they could not access services. Is this the Ontario that meets the needs of those with disabilities? I say absolutely and categorically no.

Those who exist—and exist they do—in dire poverty on Ontario disability actually make less now: 18% less than they did in 1993, when adjusted for inflation. That is unacceptable. It is actually in contravention of the United Nations, and we are a signatory to the United Nations rights of those with disabilities. It's also breaking that law.

So here we have an act, unenforced, as you heard my colleague say. In fact, everybody here, I'm sure, has heard from people in their ridings—I certainly have—of people being denied services in businesses, in restaurants, because of their dogs or because of their chairs or because of their needs; that is ongoing.

In fact, I turned out for a wonderful walk that happens every year in High Park, sponsored by the Lions Club, for guide dogs and their owners. All of them came to me with the same complaint and that is if you have a seeing-eye dog, you might be in luck, but if you have a therapy dog, good luck getting that dog access to the places of employment, the places of service, that you need. That is Ontario, and that Ontario is not an Ontario that is truly accessible, not even close.

I could go on. I could talk about the 1,450 parents who are over the age of 70 who are still looking after their children with severe disabilities. What will happen to those folk, those children and adults with disabilities—who need around-the-clock care, in many instances—when their parents or caregivers die? Good question. No answer, in the province of Ontario.

What will happen to families like the Telfords, who, going forward, cannot get help for their children and their family members? This government has no answer.

The \$42 million that was in the budget to help with those on the waiting lists for services accounts for 14% only—14% only—of those people on the waiting lists.

I haven't even talked about the people who work in the field, those people who bravely staff agencies, who are paid slightly over minimum wage, who are not having either pay equity acknowledged or raises acknowledged, who are understaffed, who are chronically—as are most of their agencies, chronically; a third of all agencies in the province—understaffed and in deficit.

This is not the province that is accessible and that is positive towards those who live with disabilities.

So, just to sum up, what have we done? The answer: Something. Not much, perhaps. Where do we need to go? A long, long way. What do we need to do? A whole lot more before we're even in compliance with our own laws, never mind the lofty goals of the United Nations and all of those who truly care about doing something, and not just spinning something, about rights for those who live with disabilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

I'd like to offer my thanks to the interpreter who has agreed to be on the floor, and we show our appreciation to them. Thank you very much.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's ... chronic fatigue and" others, "is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and

treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health" and Long-Term Care "to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I have had over 750 people in the last two weeks sign this petition online, in addition to the paper editions. I'm in agreement with this petition and will provide it to page Jeffrey.

1540

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Michael to deliver to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Christine.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas social assistance benefits in Ontario leave recipients far below the poverty line, struggling to meet the basic costs of living, and without any resources to handle emergencies;

"Whereas the provincial government has announced deep cuts to the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit;

"Whereas this program provides emergency support to help families pay for basic utilities;

"Whereas this program provides options for vulnerable people including women, children and people with disabilities to escape domestic violence and transition to safer housing;

"Whereas the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit is a critical emergency" support "program that helps to prevent homelessness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario restore full funding for the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and ensure that it continues to go directly to those who need it."

I agree with this. I'll affix my signature and give it to page Farzan.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this petition, and I'll affix my name to it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to enjoy their benefits;

"Whereas Ontario's Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

"Whereas these exceptions ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources."

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Michael to again deliver to the table.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has eliminated non-hospital physiotherapy service from the Health Insurance Act;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby oppose the proposed changes, as outlined in bulletin 3095, released April 18, 2013. We feel strongly that the removal of all non-hospital OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services in the community will contribute to a decline in overall health and independence for seniors. The privatization of physiotherapy services will result in an increased financial burden for myself and my family as we grow older. With fewer opportunities to maintain a regular schedule of physiotherapy treatments in our seniors' homes or retirement facilities, we feel that this will lead to a reduction in our ability to live independently in the community, putting additional strain on health care systems as hospitals and long-term care become the only options for those with ongoing need for physiotherapy treatment."

Madam Speaker, I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Joseph's Health Care centre has decided to close its less than 15-year-old community hydrotherapy pool on June 28/13. Hundreds of people in pain will be denied this imperative therapy which has been specifically ordered by their physicians and physiotherapists. There is no other affordable pool in the area with three depth levels, salt water at least 92 degrees F with excellent accessibility and hydrotherapy leadership. This decision is in opposition to the statements of the health minister to increase health dollars in the community for physiotherapy and for seniors. Pool patrons' requests to work with St. Joseph's to continue this program have been ignored. The sacrificial work of fundraising to build the pool is being ignored.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask you to direct St. Joseph's Health Care centre to continue its hydrotherapy program in this excellent, appropriate pool. This decision will save huge amounts of health dollars both now and in the future."

I sign this petition and give it to page Farzan to deliver to the table.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has eliminated non-hospital physiotherapy service from the Health Insurance Act;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby oppose the proposed changes to the health care act of Ontario as outlined in bulletin 3095, released April 18, 2013. We strongly believe that the removal of all non-hospital OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services in the community will contribute to a decline in overall health and independence for seniors. The privatization of physiotherapy services will result in an increased financial burden for myself and my family as we grow older. With fewer opportunities to maintain a regular schedule of physiotherapy treatments in our seniors' homes or retirement facilities, we feel this will lead to a reduction in our ability to live independently in the community, putting additional strain on health care systems as hospitals and long-term care become the only options for those with ongoing need for physiotherapy treatment."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature and send it down with Hannah.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by up to 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I agree with this and I will give it to page Jeffrey.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Tire Fee Increases Petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

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"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

It's signed by many people from my riding, and I'll hand it to page Laura.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the process popularly known as 'declawing' is actually an amputation, that is the equivalent of cutting off a human's fingers from the knuckle up;

"Whereas the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association considers 'declawing' to be an unnecessary cosmetic procedure;

"Whereas research has shown that declawing a cat significantly reduces a cat's quality of life and leads to behavioural and health problems;

"Whereas declawing eliminates a cat's ability to defend itself when in danger; and

"Whereas the process is considered to be inhumane and is banned in more than 40 countries;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ban the unnecessary and inhuman procedure known as 'declawing' in the province of Ontario."

I support this petition and will give this to page Hooriya to deliver.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to the ophthalmology funding for physician services and diagnostic testing, retroactive to April 1, 2012; and

"Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care system."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it to page Jakob.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Joseph's Health Care centre has decided to close its less than 15 year old community hydrotherapy pool on June 28/13. Hundreds of people in pain will be denied this imperative therapy which has been specifically ordered by their physicians and physiotherapists. There is no other affordable pool in the area with three depth levels, salt water at least 92 degrees F with excellent accessibility and hydrotherapy leadership. This decision is in opposition to the statements of the health minister to increase health dollars in the community for physiotherapy and for seniors. Pool patrons' requests to work with St. Joseph's to continue this program have been ignored. The sacrificial work of fundraising to build the pool is being ignored.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask you to direct St. Joseph's Health Care centre to continue its hydrotherapy program in this excellent, appropriate pool. This decision will save huge amounts of health dollars both now and in the future."

I have signed this petition, and I give it to page Jack to deliver.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2013 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 28, 2013, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I am happy to be able to resume my remarks from this morning when we adjourned. I've got about 10 and a half minutes left.

This morning, I spent the first nine or 10 minutes talking about the deficit situation, where we came in in 2003, left a \$5.5-billion deficit by the outgoing Conservatives, how it took us a couple of years to balance that budget, and then we ran three consecutive balanced budgets, which took us to 2008. Then, of course, the recession hit, and we all know that that has dramatically affected national and sub-national governments all across the planet.

In 2003, one of the things we talked about was three deficits. It was the financial deficit, but we also talked about a services and an infrastructure deficit, and I want to talk a little bit about the infrastructure part of it this afternoon, in the 10 minutes or so that I have left, and tie that back to how we ended up to some degree in a deficit position, because, as I said this morning, many govern-

ments chose to invest through the recession to mitigate the damage that was occurring, and we knew—I certainly knew, as a member from the north, representing Thunder Bay–Atikokan—that the money that was being spent on infrastructure projects in the years leading up to our election as Liberals in 2003 was not significant. Most people know that; they don’t argue that.

By way of example, I think I would just point to some of the things that have gone on in my riding when it comes to infrastructure spending. I’m sure all members in the Legislature here today have benefited from infrastructure investments in their ridings. I would absolutely be able to say, probably with a great deal of certainty, that out of 107 ridings, probably most, if not all of them, benefited from these infrastructure investments. It’s very, very important, and it’s very key.

In my riding, I would start, I think, with probably the biggest success story we’ve had in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and that is what has occurred at the Bombardier plant in my riding. When we were elected in 2003, that plant, I think it’s fair to say, was probably in danger of closing. The employment level at Bombardier in 2003 was down to 200 to 250 people.

That goes right back to the 1995 announcement by the Harris Conservatives. They took a policy position—I’m not going to pass judgment on it; I will be able to tell you the result of it, though. In 1995, they very publicly announced that, “We are no longer in the mass transit game,” so from 1995 to 2003 there was no public money invested. The city of Toronto could not go it alone just off of their municipal property tax base. In the 2003 provincial election, we stepped up in a very big way, and we made a commitment to mass transit, and not just for these large projects. As well, through gas tax funding to all the municipalities, I think Thunder Bay has received about, in nine years at \$2 million, maybe \$18 million, \$15 million to \$20 million from us just on the gas tax funding.

But when we stepped up in 2003 and said, “We’re going to get back into the mass transit game”—I think we currently have about \$16 billion worth of mass-transit-related projects going on in Ontario at the moment, and, of course, we’re committed to many, many more. What it meant for my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the Bombardier plant is simply this: In 2003, at that point, Bombardier, internationally, had just closed about six plants across the planet. They were down to 200 to 250 employees in the plant in my riding. And I don’t know this, but I can only assume that there might have been the possibility that that plant could have been closed and we could have lost it permanently. Since we made the decision to invest in mass transit, we have announced \$3 billion worth of projects that are at the Bombardier plant in Ontario; \$1.5 billion of that is provincial money.

The employment workforce at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay has gone from 200 to 250 people to over 1,400 people, and that particular plant in Thunder Bay is solid for at least 10 years going forward. This is obviously, by our standard, as a population of about 120,000

people, a significant addition to the workforce. I’ll tell you, every time you tour it and you see the young faces—not only young faces, but the older faces who are now going to make it to retirement, who weren’t sure that they would make it to retirement. But many of these younger people who previously may have had to have left the community to find jobs have now been able to purchase a home.

Most of the people in Thunder Bay are familiar with what has gone on with the real estate market in Thunder Bay for the last five or six years. Prices have never been seen like this before, and bidding wars—a lot of that has been infused by the workforce at that plant, 1,200 people. That’s only part of it.

My point is simply this: That’s an example of infrastructure investments that have had a direct benefit in my community. I have to believe, given what was coming from the other parties, that this is not a decision that they would have made. So when we want to talk about deficit, that’s fine; we made a decision to invest through that. I gave the example of the federal Conservative government—remember that they’re the former Reform Conservative Alliance, this group. They were the ones that knew how to take care of your pocketbook, and they have about a \$26-billion deficit of their own. Ontario is about 40% of the Canadian economy; you could say on a relative basis that our deficit number is actually less than the federal government’s—and they’re the ones that know how to take care of your pocketbook?

Other infrastructure examples in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan: About three months ago, we just announced the opening—we didn’t announce it. We’re going to formally announce it soon, but we just had open in my riding—this is another piece of infrastructure money that we chose and made a policy decision to move forward on the health care side: a brand new, 132-unit supportive housing project in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

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We have had, for quite some time, a significant issue related to ALC patients in our hospital—alternate-level-of-care people taking up acute care beds in Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. The opening of the new Leila Greco centre has freed up, I would say—out of that 132 people who are now living there—probably anywhere from 20% to 40% of those people, had they not had available to them the Sister Leila Greco supportive housing complex, quite possibly could have been taking up an acute care bed in Thunder Bay Regional. So not only have we, through infrastructure investments, provided people with the appropriate care in the appropriate setting; we have freed up acute care beds at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and, at the same time, we’ve created 110 brand new jobs.

It’s an example of what the infrastructure investments have done in my riding. As I said earlier, I’m sure there are a number of people in here in most ridings that could make the same claim. It’s some of what has happened.

It’s easy to say there’s a deficit.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Yes. We hired 4,000 more doctors. We've hired 16,000 more nurses. When the official opposition was in power, they fired 6,000 nurses. The third party had 3,000 fewer nurses working when they finished their reign. If that's what their plan is, should they have the good fortune to form government some day in the future, they should let people know, because I can tell you, representing a community that's been chronically underserved when it comes to primary care for decades, we now have, through our investments, been able to provide primary care for 15,000 more people than was the case when we were elected in 2003. That's an example of what you can do when you make strategic investments. It helps the economy, it improves health care and it improves infrastructure.

Another piece that we talk about somewhat, but probably not often enough, as a northerner who represents small municipalities as well—Thunder Bay is the biggie in northwestern Ontario, but obviously, by southern Ontario standards, it's not big at all. In my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I represent six other organized municipalities: O'Connor, Conmee, Neebing, Gillies, Oliver Paipoonge and Atikokan. All of those communities have large geographic land bases and very, very small tax bases.

My friends in the official opposition will remember, when they were going through their downloading exercise, to be fair, that not only was it the social services that they downloaded, but they downloaded responsibility as well for a lot of roads and bridges. It's a fact. The small municipalities simply do not have the tax base to support that kind of road and bridge infrastructure.

So what have some of our infrastructure investments done? Well, they have tremendously eased the burden on those small communities like the ones in my riding that I've just referenced. Without provincial government support and some federal government support from time to time—we'd love to see them play a bigger role in this—they wouldn't have been able to do it. They simply would not have been able to do it.

We have invested heavily in roads and bridges, and I will say that we've heard very recently that the Minister of Transportation has announced a new \$100-million infrastructure fund for small rural and northern municipalities that we expect we're going to roll out in the fall, this October. We're looking forward to that. The minister has also announced that it's his intention to go forward with a public consultation on making that program permanent so that, for those small rural communities and northern communities with these large geographic land bases and incredibly small populations, we're going to try and put something in place for them. We're going to start designing it so that we can ensure, on a go-forward basis, that there's going to be something there to help them with that infrastructure. They cannot do it on their own. It's just a fact.

My 20 minutes are basically up. I didn't get a chance to talk about the small business pieces that we've done. The social assistance piece in this budget is incredibly

significant. I know it's always understated when the others tend to talk about it; that's a bit of a disappointment. The 1% increase on social assistance, by the way, equals about \$50 million and it totals up to about 16% since we were elected in 2003. There's much more I wish I had time to talk about on that front, but I look forward to an opportunity to respond to the comments of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments—maybe not some questions, but comments on the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan and his 20-minute rotation that started this morning prior to question period. Again, I spoke this morning on the budget motion, and I think where we really have the difference between the Liberal-NDP coalition compared to the official opposition is, we've put some very pragmatic ideas on the table that the government ignored.

I can appreciate the member talking about infrastructure, but you know what he didn't talk about? He didn't talk about the fact that many municipalities feel that the elimination of the Connecting Link subsidy for infrastructure is a download that the Liberal government is downloading on to municipalities. In fact, last year, many municipalities felt that the community start-up benefit was a download that the government opposite had put on municipalities.

Again, they talk a good game when they show up at AMO or ROMA. They talk a good game when they suggest arbitration reform is high on their list. Yet when my friend from Simcoe—Grey tables a private member's bill in consultation with AMO, which is supported by the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, the mimosa coalition bands together again and defeats it.

When you look municipalities in the eye, and they ask you about Connecting Link, you give them a straight answer. When they ask you about arbitration, I think you need to look them in the face and give them a straight answer on why this budget is silent on it, why both of you voted against it.

In my municipality, there was an arbitration award last week—retroactive—21% on a long-term-care facility that is already in jeopardy of having budget cuts. That's what the government hasn't talked about—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I sit here and I listen to this stuff, and it's really amazing.

With all due respect to the governing body, if I remember correctly, if my memory serves me correctly, I do remember a thing called Transit City. I do recall the number \$4 billion, and I do believe that the new Premier was the transportation minister when they shut it down. That was in Toronto.

When they say they're for expanding transportation in the GTA, and they say they want to expand it in the Hamilton area—I'll tell you, I've lived in Hamilton a long time, and we have been—

Interjection: How long?

Mr. Paul Miller: A long time. I'm still waiting for that LRT in Hamilton. I'm still waiting—we finally got a bus, the BLIne from Stoney Creek to McMaster University. Basically, I'm not holding my breath for when it's going to happen, but I certainly hope it does because we certainly need it.

We have a busier airport now; the John C. Munro airport is busier now. It's a transportation hub. We are now actually getting domestic flights to the Caribbean, and there's a new person coming there who might want to fly to other areas, destinations.

We certainly could use an LRT. We certainly could use some financial support in the Hamilton area.

I hate to say this, Madam Speaker, but the GTA ends in Burlington. They forgot about—when you go over the bridge, there is more of Ontario there. Once they get over the bridge and start spreading around a little more money, it's going to be a lot better for my area. I think they want to. Will they? Stay tuned, folks. I don't want to be pessimistic, but I'm really watching very closely what's going to happen in the next few months.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, Madam Speaker, it's a delight for me to rise this afternoon. It's unfortunate that I didn't get to hear the first part of my colleague's speech this morning, but it goes without saying, the speech delivered by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan was a magnificent speech, covering all the great aspects of what's contained in the budget.

He touched a point which is very close to me. I remember in the late 1990s, there was the famous Crombie report, the Who Does What committee. David Crombie did a magnificent job of coming up with a series of recommendations. But the government of the day, of course, didn't listen to the tiny, perfect mayor, David Crombie. They forgot about implementing what he recommended.

Then we got the famous report from the Harris government that I've always called the “who got done in committee.” Who got done in through that report was municipalities.

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Then when we came to power, Jim Watson, now the mayor of Ottawa, started the uploading exercise. I know in my community, for example, since 2008, it's \$16 million that has been uploaded from those hard-working men and women in the great riding of Peterborough. They work so hard every day to provide those services.

My colleague had a long and distinguished career in municipal politics in Thunder Bay, and I know why he ran in 2003. He ran in 2003 to correct the wrongs that were imposed on municipalities through the “who got done in committee,” as did my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River, an outstanding councillor in Toronto from Scarborough. He decided to run because he wanted to reverse the “who got done in committee,” and that was municipalities.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope people were tuning in from Thunder Bay this afternoon and witnessed the great

dissertation that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan did on this budget—a magnificent job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Madam Speaker, I listened with great intent this afternoon as the verbal jabs and jousting here in the chamber continued on the budget.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan talks about what a wonderful job they're doing in health care and job creation and job stimulation and fighting the deficit, when, Madam Speaker, you and I both know that this is just more Liberal posturing and spinning.

The fact of the matter is that health care in my fair riding of Northumberland–Quinte West is facing some serious challenges. The Trenton Memorial Hospital lab is being closed because of the \$10-million funding gap that this Liberal government has created. The lab, when it does close—it's going to threaten the services provided in ER. Two nurses have been lost at Trenton Memorial Hospital because of their so-called fiscal restraints and changes to health care and improving the health care system. Well, this is not improving the quality of health care in Northumberland–Quinte West.

Let's talk about the Big Move. I have listened quite often in the last day or so to constituents who have contacted my office about the so-called Big Move, and they're quite upset with the proposed 1% HST hike and five-cent gas tax hike at the pumps. People in my riding are very upset about this proposed tax grab. Just call it what it is. It's not revenue tools; they're taxes. Just be honest with the people of Ontario.

This budget does very little for the province of Ontario. It's devastating to the province of Ontario. Tim Hudak and the PC Party are the only ones standing up for the people here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the four speakers: from Leeds–Grenville, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the Minister of Rural Affairs, and Northumberland–Quinte West.

I have to say to the member from Leeds–Grenville, I have to thank him, because he made me smile. I've got to tell you, he actually stood up as a Conservative in the Legislature and used the word “downloading” and somehow tried to link the word “downloading” to the Liberals on this side of the House. A Conservative member; can you imagine anybody doing that? It's kind of like leading with your chin. I think the only reason he did it is because he knew in two minutes I didn't have enough time to respond. That could be the only reason he probably threw that out there. It was really quite remarkable.

I will say, quickly, on the arbitration piece that he raised: In fact, he must know that we actually had that in the 2012 budget. As I remember, it was at committee that the Conservatives and the NDP got together and voted it out. That's what I was told; I wasn't at that committee. That's how I remember it.

I would say to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—he said he has been waiting for mass transit for some time. I would suggest to him and his constituents that he's going to have an opportunity to take a rather interesting position when it comes to the expansion of mass transit in the GTA in the not-too-distant future. If his constituents really are looking forward to an expansion of mass transit in southern Ontario, they'll be very interested in what position he and his party take as we move forward on that issue.

I want to thank the Minister of Rural Affairs as well for his comments. He's right: There were a whole bunch of us who decided we were going to run in the 2003 provincial election because we were all on municipal councils in the years preceding 2003 and we really did get to see how we were being treated as municipalities by the then Harris Conservatives.

I would say, finally, to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West—he calls what we've done in health care “posturing”: 4,000 more doctors; 16,000 more nurses; from \$30 billion to \$48 billion; and one small example in my riding, 15,000 more people with access to primary care. If that's posturing, I could use a little more of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to join the debate over the budget motion today and to follow the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Just before I get into my speech, I can say that I was up in Thunder Bay with the member from Brampton West and a number of other members with the finance committee. The things I heard in Thunder Bay that day I didn't see in the budget. I know the people in Thunder Bay, when we were there for the finance committee, were very concerned about the jobs crisis in the north. Also, the one thing that I heard loud and clear that day when I was up there was the fact about the Junior Ranger Program. I know the member there will know that—I'm sure he heard time and time again, because we heard from the majority of the presenters there, about the Liberals' decimation of the program and ending the Junior Ranger Program in the province.

I'm proud to stand up for the people who sent me to Queen's Park from the riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. I'm proud to stand up for all the communities that I represent in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and to bring feedback from the people across my riding to Queen's Park. We had constituency week last week, and I got valuable input from many people from many of the communities I represent regarding this budget, and they're concerned about the direction that the Liberal government—propped up, of course, by the third party—they're concerned about the direction that this province is going.

Speaker, I want to start off as well by saying that a budget should always strive to create the best environment for the people in Ontario to succeed. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has failed in its attempt to draft a

budget that does that. The budget falls short because it lacks the necessary fundamentals to create jobs and grow Ontario's economy.

What people in my riding are concerned about is that over the last number of days since the NDP and Liberals announced their support of this budget—or since the NDP announced they're going to support this budget—we've heard that the people of Ontario are going to be experiencing higher taxes to pay for Toronto transit. I know the people in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex are concerned with any time the Liberals talk about increasing taxes, because we've seen what's happened with eHealth, Ornge and gas plants.

The people in my riding are concerned about the Premier talking about increasing the HST by 1%; they're concerned about a possible five-cent-per-litre gas tax hike. The last thing the people of Ontario need, and in my riding specifically, is to be hit with a massive tax grab from this Liberal government.

Without a strong foundation and without the right economic fundamentals, our economy is not going to grow and, in fact, our economy is going to get worse. One essential element of a strong foundation is a government that represents the people. This is done through detailed consultations with stakeholders and constituents alike. I disagree with this government's approach of implementing legislation without consultation. The people know the challenges Ontario is facing because they live with them each and every day, and therefore must be considered in government legislation.

An example of this government's lack of consultation can be found on page 262 of the recent Wynne-Horwath budget, which announces the elimination of the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit for only contact call centres. This change could result in the loss of over 25,000 jobs across Ontario with a single decision.

Now, it's important to note that jobs in Ontario are hard to come by. There are over 600,000 men and women who are unemployed in the province and of course there could be, sadly, an additional 25,000 people out of work with the implementation of this single policy. The majority of these contact call centres are located in places such as North Bay, London, Chatham, Sarnia, Brantford, Vaughan and Windsor.

1620

Currently, as I've said in the last couple of days in question period, London has the highest big-city unemployment rate in the country. Sadly, there is 11.3% unemployment in North Bay, 9.3% unemployment in Windsor and almost 10% in London. Ironically, contact call centres, which are located in all of these regions, are one of the few industries that are managing to succeed. It makes no sense why the Liberals and the NDP would put so many jobs at risk when this industry creates so many jobs and is located in many regions where jobs are scarce.

Ontario has a 7.7% unemployment rate. This budget does nothing to help our province grow or create jobs. In fact, for residents who are employed, as I said, in the contact calling industry, it makes things worse.

I'm saddened that the Wynne government is taking the same approach as the Dalton McGuinty government. It is evident that nothing has changed. We are seeing policies that impact thousands of people being implemented without consultation. We are seeing this government do what is best for their government, and not what is best for the people in Ontario.

Again, regarding the issue that's on page 262—the elimination of this tax credit—the problem is that the government didn't consult with the industry. That's what we're opposed to. It's no different than what they did in last year's budget, which, ironically, the NDP supported, which put at risk 60,000 jobs in Ontario's horse racing industry. It's the same approach with this issue—on page 262—this year, which is going to devastate an industry in London in particular.

Of course, I said today in question period that—

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Obviously, I've raised—I've excited the NDP I think because I've been talking the truth, and that is that they are going to pass the second Dalton McGuinty-Kathleen Wynne-Andrea Horwath budget.

In my riding, I have met with dozens of organizations and groups that represent a variety of social and economic interests. Here at Queen's Park, I have met—as a number of other MPPs, I'm sure, have—with hundreds of stakeholder groups and individuals who all tell me the same thing: that Ontario needs a new direction. Things have to change, and the people have to be involved in that change.

Since the resignation of Dalton McGuinty as Premier, the government party is sitting in different chairs, they have different titles and new business cards. But just as a zebra can't change its stripes, neither can the failed McGuinty-Wynne government.

Speaker, this lack of consultation also speaks to the lack of transparency in this Liberal government. We have seen eHealth, Ornge, diluted cancer treatment drugs and last, but certainly not least, a billion-dollar gas plant scandal. I'm not even going back more than a couple of years here. There are many, many more tales of scandal and waste. If I were to go into detail about the failures of this government, we would be here all day.

Further to my point, Premier Wynne's throne speech a number of months ago outlined her unwillingness to make the necessary and urgent decisions needed to fix the Liberals' made-in-Ontario jobs and debt crisis. When the Premier says she wants to build on Mr. McGuinty's legacy, I question how she could fail to recognize the amount of scandal that the McGuinty legacy is actually built upon. Indeed, the McGuinty-Wynne legacy is a tale of injustice and mismanagement that has cost Ontario taxpayers billions of dollars. While the scandals pile up, the taxpayers are being left with the bill. It seems that the culture of this government is scandal, waste and mismanagement.

Ontario families know that they cannot trust this Liberal government to get to the bottom of these scandals,

and that this government can no longer be trusted and no longer has the confidence of the people of Ontario. The people can't trust them, but somehow the third party—the NDP—are going to support them.

It is totally unacceptable that this government is being supported for their corruption. The priorities of the Wynne-Horwath government are not for the people of Ontario. Instead, they are about playing politics, staying in power and keeping their paycheques.

The Premier's priorities are to increase her government, and we see this through and through in her budget motion. Ironically, one of the first orders of business for Kathleen Wynne was to increase cabinet by 22%, adding over \$3 million to the province's debt. That follows deliberate choices to hand the chequebook over to union bosses at the expense of students and parents in our education system. They're going to continue the expensive Feed-In Tariff Program and park the Drummond commission's 362 recommendations permanently on the shelf.

In the budget, we see no initiatives to reduce the size and cost of government. Instead of restraint, we continue to have a government spending more, doubling our debt over the past nine years while Ontario taxpayers are getting less.

Over the past decade, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector, but at the same time we saw 300,000 more added to an already bloated government payroll. Soon, the only industry in Ontario will be to work in government, Speaker. If you look at the StatsCan data from the last year, the government sector has grown by 48,000 jobs. That's 48,000 more people in the province of Ontario working for the government.

During the last 12 months, we have not added a single net new job in the private sector. Fewer people are working outside the government, paying for more people working inside the government with higher wages, benefits and pensions than those who are paying the taxes.

We see reports from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicating that public sector workers earn 27% more in wages, pensions and benefits than their counterparts in the private sector. Again, the size and cost of government has grown above and beyond the ability of taxpayers to pay the bills.

Speaker, ignoring the issues Ontario is facing is not solving the problem. Throwing money at the province's problems is not a long-term solution. We are facing the biggest jobs and debt crisis of our lifetime. Anyone who has ever been faced with a crisis or emergency will tell you that spending more money and ignoring the core issues will not save you. The only way forward is to move confidently and boldly in the direction that you know is right.

Premier Wynne indicated that she expanded her cabinet so that she would have "the tools needed to deal with the problems Ontario is facing." Based on the 22% overnight growth in her cabinet, I would anticipate that

our Premier is expecting Ontario's problems to only get worse. She has more than enough people in her cabinet to address the issues Ontario is facing. Again, I guess our Premier is expecting a disaster.

But I have news, Speaker. This disaster can be avoided. Ontario needs a new approach, one that will create jobs and stop reckless overspending. It's clear that the current government is not up to the challenge of doing this. The Ontario PC Party and opposition leader Tim Hudak are the only party with a comprehensive plan to end overspending and grow Ontario's economy.

I am proud to say that our Ontario PC team has put forward a plan to rein in overspending, get our economic fundamentals right and grow the economy through our Paths to Prosperity white papers: bold ideas to create a leaner public service that delivers more value for less money; to lower taxes on business so they can invest and create jobs in Ontario; to reduce the heavy hand of the 300,000 regulations that stand between businesses and success; to fix the outdated labour laws that have made us uncompetitive and are costing us jobs; and to create more affordable energy for Ontario families by treating energy as an economic fundamental rather than a social experiment.

We can no longer be content by being first in debt and last in job creation. Ontario will rise again and reach its true potential, but only if we change the team that leads this province. Our party is committed to working hard for Ontario families, and that is why we are offering real solutions for the disaster that this Liberal government, propped up again by the third party for the second year in a row—the disaster that these two parties have gotten Ontario into.

Just to close in a few moments, I want to talk about the debt crisis we're faced with in the province of Ontario today.

1630

In 2003, when the McGuinity Liberals came to power, the debt in the province of Ontario was around \$139 billion. A recent report came out saying that in fiscal year 2019-20, the debt in the province of Ontario is going to hit \$550 billion. I know, coming from the private sector, that if we ran our family business or if MPPs ran their household budgets like this Liberal government runs the province, we would be broke tomorrow.

Another scary statistic is the fact that the debt per man, woman and child in this province is now \$20,000. That's just the provincial portion of the debt. You know, my wife and I are excited to be having a child in August—

Interjections: Hear, hear.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you. And, you know, it's really concerning that children today are faced with this burden, thanks to the Dalton McGuinity, Kathleen Wynne and now Andrea Horwath government. This budget alone is adding billions and billions of dollars to the provincial debt, and it's just a real shame that we saw the Premier walk away while Ontario was heading down this path.

Again, our party is committed to working hard for Ontario families. We've put out a dozen policy papers; ideas that are tough decisions, but we have to get Ontario back on track. Under this government, under this apparently, supposedly new government, there has been no change and no renewal. While the politically easy thing to do may have been to let the budget pass, as I said those in the third party have chosen to do, we have a responsibility to demand a plan that brings about a major change in direction, a major change in course.

It is unfortunate that Premier Wynne has decided to ignore our recommendations and has included none of them in her budget. This Premier had an opportunity to change course, an opportunity to move Ontario onto the right path. But regrettably for Ontario, for families and businesses in this province, Premier Kathleen Wynne and Andrea Horwath have chosen to further entrench the Liberals' spending and scandal-plagued legacy.

We need a new approach in Ontario, and it starts with having only as much government as we can afford. For this reason, I'm proud that the PC caucus has taken a principled approach in opposing the budget motion, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in doing this today.

It's been an honour to provide feedback from residents across Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and on behalf of the hundreds of businesses I've met with since I've been able to serve as MPP over the last 18 months. But I can't reiterate enough that the Liberal government has failed in its attempt to draft a budget that deals with our jobs and debt crisis here in the province. The budget falls short because it lacks the fundamentals to create jobs and grow our economy here in the province.

With that, Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened to my colleague as he spoke here today, and I always like to listen to him. It's too bad that someone so young is so Conservative so fast, because, you know, usually you grow into that. As you become a bitter old man, you become like what he is today. But he got there really early.

He belongs to a party that he's very proud does nothing but complain; a party that does nothing to help the people in the horse racing industry and then blames the NDP; a party that does nothing on the budget, never made a single recommendation in committee or in the House or anywhere leading up to the budget time and then complains about everything that's in it; a party that does nothing for apprenticeships or to try to save jobs and then complains when the government changes the laws.

You know, what Tim Hudak, as leader of the party, says Ontario needs is more people like Doug Ford. If we only had Doug Ford in this place, said Tim Hudak, we'd be much better off. Well, I'd like to talk about the National Post today and Chris Selley. He wrote a whole column, and at the end he concluded it like this: "Doug Ford is not some garden-variety loudmouth; he makes

Queen's Park's legacy loudmouths look like Trappist monks. He's a magnet for controversy, a sworn and virulent enemy of the media, playing a key role in a thoroughly botched attempt to manage drug allegations against his brother. If Mr. Hudak and company think he's ... what Ontarians want, and really what their party needs, I greatly fear for their prospects."

I greatly fear for the prospects of this party too.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? Order.

The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are moments when I listen to my friend opposite in the official opposition. We are arguably the most privileged generation in Canadian history. We're growing up with an education system that would be the envy and dreams of our parents and our grandparents. We live in a country where everyone gets to vote. We have the best school system in the English-speaking world.

I remember my grandmother came to Hamilton in 1908. She grew up in poverty. Two of her nine children died. We did not have the medicare system, nor did we have the benefits or the pensions.

What I hear is an incredible amount of selfishness when we have the most robust job creation record almost in the western world, certainly for any manufacturing economy. Our auto sector is the best it has ever been, and more dynamic. We've never produced more cars in the history of that.

But I've given the example—this is a much more challenging economy than anyone has ever gathered. You know, Pittsburgh in 1983 and 1984 saw 104 of 104 steel plants close. Today there are two steel plants in Pittsburgh—only two. And, you know, of the 243,000 people who lost their jobs in Pittsburgh in 24 months—those two plants make more steel than they ever made in Pittsburgh, including that. Do you know how many people make steel in Pittsburgh in those two plants? Some 300.

This is the new industrial economy. What the party opposite does not understand is that we are making more cars than we ever have, with less people, and it has been hard.

When Mike Harris was in, before this transition happened, Wallaceburg lost 4,000 tool-and-die jobs in a town of 11,000. We created 400,000 jobs, 70 of which require a university education system—which we have doubled and they cut. They don't understand the economy, and that gentleman—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Go ahead.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: You know, I think that the fine member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex had some very,

very solid points. I have to say he represents his riding with distinction and he's great to have here in the PC caucus. The people back home should be very proud of him.

Here we have a government that likes to grandstand. The NDP—the member from Beaches—East York talks about the horse racing industry and how they were the saviours of the horse racing industry, yet they were the ones who propped up this corrupt Liberal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West will withdraw. I know I hadn't before, but I don't like to hear it repeated.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Withdraw.

This is the NDP government who propped up this Liberal government, who is scandal-ridden. Here we are, at a point when we have the Liberal government, who spends \$1 billion on gas plants and the relocations, to save a few Liberal seats, and yet I guess NDP seats aren't worth as much, because they've bought off the NDP party with \$1 billion for 18 seats—so \$1 billion for a couple of Liberal seats, or \$1 billion for 18 NDP seats.

You know, the Minister of Transportation stood across here just moments ago and said we had the greatest education system in the world. Well, this Liberal Party is the reason why I am here and left the teaching profession—because we don't have the best education system in the world and we're not preparing our students for the global economy of the 21st century. Only the PC Party is standing up for Ontarians in this chamber, doing what's right for Ontarians.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What's clear is that people in the last election did not elect Tim Hudak as the Premier of Ontario. The people of Ontario went to the polls and they said, "We're bringing back a minority Parliament in order to be able to deal with the issues that face Ontario today."

It seems to me that what's been happening since that election is that the Tories under Tim Hudak have not understood what the voters have told them. They've said, "Listen, we don't want a majority government at this point. We certainly don't want Tim Hudak at this point"—because he was the guy who was ahead in the polls who ended up losing government last time, so it's clear that they rejected him. What they want is this Parliament to actually do something for the people of Ontario.

So yes, Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats rolled up their sleeves and said, "Listen, how do we do the best that we can, given the budget process with the Liberal government?" We put in place a number of things that we're quite proud of dealing with how we can get long-term-care services in our homes, making sure that we can get a reduction in auto insurance for people so that they have some respite in the pocketbook, dealing with youth unemployment and a number of other issues,

and the government said yes to those things, which was good.

But then the most important thing is we needed to have transparency and accountability, and we said, "We need to put in place something called the financial accountability officer. We need to make sure that the government does not bring road tolls by the back door, that it has to come through this Legislature so that this Legislature is the one to decide, because we, as New Democrats, don't believe that the HST or any other form of costs onto consumers is the right way to go when it comes to dealing with transit. We believe transit is important, but we need to find other ways to finance it."

So it's clear what the people have said, and I think the Tories, at one point, have to start asking themselves a question: Is there another word in their lexicon other than "no"? Is there another word in their lexicon that allows them to do something for the people back home? Because it seems at this point that the only thing they can do is oppose, and they can't propose any solutions to the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member from Beaches-East York, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the fine member from Northumberland-Quinte West and the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Just one thing—two points, I guess, to the Minister of Transportation. One, I'm not sure if he's aware that Ontario's wage growth in the last 12 months is dead last in the country, and for over 75 months Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average, so it's not a record that his Liberal government can be proud of.

We have this jobs crisis in the province with 600,000 men and women today. These are people that we all know—family, neighbours, friends—who have lost their job, and it's because this government is mishandling Ontario's economy.

There are five things that we need to do, and we talked about this in our Paths to Prosperity. One, we need to get the books balanced in the province of Ontario as quickly as possible. We need affordable energy in this province. We need to reform labour laws. We don't think that people should have to join a union or—

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, or be forced to join a union to get a job or to keep a job. We have hundreds of thousands of rules and regulations that Ontario businesses are faced with every day. We need to cut red tape, and we need to cut taxes to create jobs in this province. As Conservatives, we recognize the challenges that this government has dug for this province, and that's why we put out bold initiatives to get Ontario back on track. It's going to take strong leadership and it's going to take Tim Hudak and the PC team to get Ontario back on track.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a

change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Harris assumes ballot item number 47 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 77.

Further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm always pleased to stand in the Legislature and represent the residents of London-Fanshawe.

I rise today on the budget motion presented by this government. While the official opposition would have you believe that this is a co-sponsored budget between the NDP and the Liberals, I would like to say to them that it takes greater leadership and courage to seek out compromise than it does to simply walk away, sight unseen, for the second year in a row. What kind of message are you sending to your constituents? That you are unwilling to do the job you were elected to do; that once the job requires any kind of effort, you aren't interested. Why work hard when you can simply walk away?

I can't figure out why you are so ready to spend millions of hard-earned tax dollars on an election yet you can't stop clamouring for fiscal restraint. If enough people wanted an election, they would have one, but currently that is simply not the case. That means it's time once again to roll up our sleeves and deliver results for people who can't afford to watch these kinds of petty political games; people who desperately need help now, not after an election or political posturing but right now. We all have a responsibility to deliver that aid at every and any chance we get.

While I don't know what the opposition is trying to accomplish, I do know that I have never been more proud of my own leader and our team. Last year, we achieved some measures of improvement to a vastly unfair Liberal budget, but this year we really made our mark and showed Ontarians the kind of results that strong and passionate leadership can deliver. We have proven that we have very different ideas about leadership and that we also have very different ideas about the challenges that Ontarians are facing. We know that people are looking for action on jobs, especially our youth, who are facing double-digit unemployment rates.

Trust me: I am from London and we know intimately the pains of soaring unemployment rates. We know that people are also worried about their health care system. They are concerned that their tax dollars are being spent on abusive scandals like Ornge and eHealth while they are lining up in hospital emergency rooms for hours at a time and watching as more and more services are removed from OHIP.

New Democrats have taken the position that by genuinely listening to the people of this province, you can improve their lives, regardless of your title. It sounds simple, and the best approaches typically are. My colleagues in the opposition seem to forget that idea every time the budget comes around, and so does this government. This government seems to forget that the people did not elect them to spend their hard-earned tax dollars

on a whim. They, too, warrant a reminder that the “just trust me” approach no longer works here anymore. How can it? Not after you have blown billions on gas plants, re-election scandals, health care dollars wasted on Ornge and eHealth.

To this government, I say, we are watching you very closely. “Accountability” and “transparency” are two words you need to start learning very quickly. The people of this province will no longer tolerate scandal while you claim to be asleep at the wheel. Make no mistake about it: Your scandals hurt us all and they devalue the work we do here.

I and my colleagues take the people’s work very seriously. Once again, New Democrats took the road less travelled. We fought the hard fight for those who need relief the most, and we delivered results that Ontarians can count on.

We put forward strong proposals that would bring back the trust and balance that has been torn away. The establishment of a financial accountability office that will prevent spending scandals before they happen is a step in the right direction for this province. The people deserve to get an independent look at the province’s spending habits.

The government has been quick to place demands on the budget of everyday working families while throwing money at corporations. It’s time to restore some fairness to the process and give Ontario families a voice at the table. They might have something interesting to say about being forced to subsidize billions of dollars in corporate tax loopholes. I know that I’m very eager to see what can be accomplished when the playing fields get levelled a bit more favourably towards everyday people.

I have to admit that I am glad that this government was prepared to listen to New Democrats and implement some of our ideas in this budget. We know these ideas are right for this province because they came from listening to people and asking them what they needed. When you are guided by those principles, it’s hard to get it wrong.

1650

As people here know, I put forward a motion to help seniors get home care when they need it, with a guaranteed wait time of five days. I am pleased that we were able to negotiate this with the government to include it in the budget. From doctors to nurses to ministers to health care experts, everyone agrees that home care is cost-effective and treats seniors with the dignity that they deserve.

To date, our health care system has refused to reflect that reality. Some would say that this is due to the financial mismanagement of our health care system. I might even agree with that, but I have been raised to believe that how we treat our seniors and our children is a direct reflection of who we are as a society. Right now, I am glad to be part of a society that will implement this vital program.

According to Ontario’s Auditor General, some Ontarians have been forced to wait as long as 262 days to

receive home care services, and currently there are more than 6,100 Ontarians on the waiting list for home care. We know that a five-day guarantee is realistic and achievable. More importantly, this is a step that will make a real difference in the lives of seniors and their families. It is the positive change that Ontarians want to see. We want to be kinder to each other.

Mr. Speaker, we know that seniors worked all their lives for their families and for this province, and it’s about time that they were treated with the respect that they have already worked for. They have earned the consideration of a government that has spent their dollars for decades.

Interjection: Madam Speaker.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I have to correct—a point of order for myself: Madam Speaker, not Mr. Speaker.

My New Democrat colleagues will be watching how this bill is implemented by the government upon passage of the budget, in a few days or next week. We know that in some communities, access to timely care is easier to provide than in others. We know that the seniors living in Timmins–James Bay and Kenora–Rainy River will not be left behind. I know that my colleagues from these ridings will be ever watchful. We don’t do this to be difficult; we do this because lives are at stake.

The numbers don’t lie. Today, 3,300 Ontarians are waiting for care by a personal support worker. An additional 2,800 are waiting for service by physiotherapists, occupational therapists and social workers. During the 2011 election, there was a home care wait-list of 10,000 Ontarians. We know the cost to clear that backlog is entirely affordable; the costs don’t even compare to the numbers that this government has blown in their seat-saver scandals. This is why New Democrats refuse to allow this neglect to continue.

It is the same philosophy that saw New Democrats insist that the auto insurance rates be cut by a minimum of 15%. When insurance companies are posting record profits, a time to seek relief is evident. We have all heard the claims of fraud and all the other reasons why insurance companies need to line their pockets. All we ask for is reasonability and fairness. This is why it is very concerning for New Democrats to watch this government claim to negotiate in good faith and then allow insurance companies to immediately jack up rates by the very amount of the discount that is being negotiated.

We want this government to know that we are watching them carefully. We are watching to see if their words match their actions. Right now, it would appear to be a close call. This province has no room left for deception or political game-playing. There are people who are making a living in their vehicles, and they are counting on us to make it right and make it fair. If it was your livelihood on the line, how would you want to be treated?

I am hoping that this government will stand behind the negotiations that were achieved over this budget, especially those gains made to support our youth. Rising to meet the challenges of youth employment is not easy,

but it is necessary. New Democrats proposed a First Start program, and this government took that issue seriously; they proposed a \$195-million youth jobs program, which essentially mirrors what the NDP proposed. We are pleased that they are further planning on addressing youth entrepreneurship, a youth innovation fund and a business-labour connectivity fund, but we haven't seen the money and how they plan on achieving this exactly.

I suggest that this government take the time to get it right, because I have spent time in classrooms with our youth. I went to Clarke Road Secondary School and talked to the youth with Andrea Horwath, our leader. I should also say that I actually attended Clarke Road in grades 9 and 10, and it's a wonderful school. When I went to that school, they actually had a lot of shop classes, which was great to see. It gave you the exposure to a different occupation choice, and a different kind of career choice.

When my children went to school, especially my daughter, I encouraged her to take shop. She took automotive and aviation. She didn't pursue a career in the skilled trades. But I think that's the importance of us teaching our youth the benefit of skilled trades and that there are different areas where people can become professionals. All contractors and skilled tradespersons are professionals. They are valued in our world and we rely on them to make sure that our homes are reconstructed, renovated and safe.

So when we were at Clarke Road Secondary School and listening and engaging in discussions with the grade 12 students, they had some very smart questions. They wanted to know how this government—one particular student was very keen, and he said, "How are they going to pay for this program? How much is it going to cost?" I suspect he was a Conservative, because he—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a good question. That's right.

What's it going to cost? But you know, we did our homework, and we explained to them, that we as New Democrats showed this government how to pay for these programs, how to pay for our initial proposals. One of the things we told this class of students is that there are corporate tax loopholes that can be closed. We think it's wasteful to allow a corporation to write off taxes for meals and entertainment and tickets at Blue Jays games. That's not a good way to spend tax dollars. We want to make sure that money comes back into a youth program for employment.

We also talked about procurement and that the LHINs and the CCACs could actually formulate a better system of procurement when they buy things, when they buy products, and streamline that so they're getting the best value for their money. As well, duplication in administration: the LHINs and CCACs—it's a top-heavy administration. Perhaps they could be looking at that and effectively streamline that administration to put money back into programs like the home care five-day guarantee.

We also talked about the balance that we took on this budget, and we proposed the OW and ODSP \$200-a-

month income so that people wouldn't have employment barriers and if they had the opportunity to get some experience, that that income wouldn't be clawed back from them.

I was glad to see a few other initiatives under that suggestion. One of them is if a family is on ODSP or OW and the child—let's say they're 16 years old and they want to venture out into the workforce, their income isn't going to be clawed back. So that's giving the children an opportunity to look for employment and engage and not have the parents penalized for their employment.

The other piece on the ODSP and OW was entrepreneurship. If someone who has a wonderful talent but they're not able to get a job, and they want to be creative, and they want to contribute, so they start their own business—well, again, if they can make up to \$200 a month, that won't be clawed back.

So as you can see, these are results, and the Conservatives haven't contributed to this budget. It's very disappointing to be in a minority government and know that the people of Ontario—you've had two majority governments prior to this minority government, and to know that this is my first time elected and I can actually get results. I have a voice for the residents of London-Fanshawe. But yet the Conservatives chose not to speak, not to speak out for the residents. I'm dumbfounded that they're not taking this opportunity to move and get results for Ontarians. This is the perfect set-up: a minority government. You can actually show your strength when you want to have something go through and get done.

I wouldn't want to be in a majority government. I mean, I certainly would be proud regardless of if it's a majority or minority and stand here and represent the people of London-Fanshawe—but to have a majority government and just constantly ram through whatever they want, every bill, and you don't have a say. You can't stand up here and vote against what they do, because—well, you can, but it's not going to make a difference. So the minority government makes a difference.

1700

This government has listened. We have done the hard work of our constituents. We don't take our jobs lightly. Every day that I come into this House, I am here to deliver results, I am here to articulate the concerns of my constituents, and I'm proud of that.

When the Conservatives lightly throw that responsibility away, that's like when you know you can vote and don't go out and vote. That's your right. They have a right to be part of this democratic process and they said no, and that's extremely disappointing. But we hear lots of negatives. We constantly hear negative comments from them. What they should be doing is taking those negative comments and getting results, giving some productive ideas.

Yes, they've got their white paper, and there have kind of been a little bit of jokes and innuendo that it's a two-
ply—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: One-ply, two-ply. If you look at that white paper, you can probably see right through it. It's called a power play. These Conservatives are looking for an election. They're looking to get power, you know. It's not about power—a minority government is what the people of Ontario sent you here for—it's about working together to get things accomplished so that Ontarians' lives are better.

I hope this Conservative government will reflect on their decision this time around—

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oh, excuse me. Yes, I should wash my mouth out with soap. That's a bad word.

Anyway, here's the thing. This government needs to reflect on their decision last session to say no and this session to say no. You're not doing justice to the voices of your constituents. You have to stand up and you have to contribute to this government and you have to give your voice.

I understand you're passionate, but turn that passion into results. Turn passion into results. I know you're passionate and you like to criticize, but you can channel that passion into actually getting results for Ontarians. Imagine the energy it takes to be negative and critical—imagine the energy it takes—whereas when you take that negative energy and funnel it into a positive outcome, you can actually get results for people. That's what we've done, and I am proud to stand here as a New Democrat with my colleagues and know that we participated in a democratic process, made this government listen to us, gave them proposals. We spoke to the Premier—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There's my member from the opposition—yes, I'm using my hands—

Interjection: Judo chop.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. But you know what? This is what it's all about. We were heard. We were heard, and the people of our ridings were heard. This government listened, and we got results for Ontarians. Really, we even proposed a balanced approach. You can say, you know, the “NDP-Liberal government budget.” However, we also gave them suggestions on how to pay for those results. It's very interesting, because, as our leader has always said, NDP governments have balanced budgets.

Interjection: You've only got a minute.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I've only got a minute left.

Interjection: Go ahead. Feel free. Cut 'em up.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad the Conservatives are here, because we always need that perspective of the grey cloud, the black cloud over the world. We need that perspective, because that helps us make sure that we know there is hope. It's not always about a black cloud over everything you do. You've got to have some hope. You've got to get up every day and say, “Things may not be the way I want, things may not be perfect, but you know what? I can make a difference.” Just because the world isn't the way I like it doesn't mean I step back

and walk away and don't participate. Participate in the democratic process. Have a voice.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 58(d), the time allotted to this debate has expired.

On May 2, 2013, Mr. Sousa moved, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Wait. “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion that this House approves in general will be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday.”

Vote deferred.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. John Milloy: Madam Speaker, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding late shows.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: Madam Speaker, I move that the late show requested by the member from Huron-Bruce directed to the Minister of Energy scheduled for tonight be rescheduled to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 29, 2013.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Madam Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, there be a timetable applied to the consideration of certain business of the House as follows:

(a) Bill 65, the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2013

When Bill 65 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the vote on second reading of the bill may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of public hearings for one day that is two calendar days after the bill receives second reading, as follows: from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. If the second calendar day after the bill receives second reading falls on a weekend, the public hearings shall take place on the following Monday; and

The deadline for acceptance by the Clerk of the Committee of written public submissions on the bill shall

be at 6 p.m. on the day the committee meets for public hearings; and

The deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 5 p.m. on the day following the day that the committee meets for public hearings; and

The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill for one day that is two calendar days after the committee meets for public hearings, as follows: from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. If the second calendar day after public hearings falls on a weekend, clause-by-clause consideration of the bill shall take place on the following Monday; and

At 4 p.m. on the day that the committee meets for clause-by-clause consideration, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

The committee shall report the bill to the House on the first sessional day following clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That, upon receiving the report of the committee, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the first sessional day following clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House, and shall be deemed to be ordered for third reading; and

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The order for third reading of the bill shall then immediately be called; and

Two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

No deferral of the third reading vote shall be permitted; and

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes; and

At the conclusion of all proceedings on the bill, the Speaker shall adjourn the House, without motion, until Monday, September 9, 2013.

(b) Parliamentary calendar

Notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, June 10, 2013, except that this provision shall have no effect if all proceedings on Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts, have concluded by midnight on Thursday, June 6, 2013; and

No other motion to revise the parliamentary calendar shall be moved before September 9, 2013, without unanimous consent.

(c) Establishment of a financial accountability office

The passage of this motion shall constitute an order to the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, no later than September 11, 2013.

The bill establishing the financial accountability office, or FAO, shall include:

Office of the FAO

The office of the FAO shall include such employees as the FAO deems necessary for the proper conduct of the business of the office, to be hired by the FAO pursuant to the budgetary limits of the office.

Terms of office and removal:

—The FAO shall hold office for a term of five years and may be reappointed for a further term, but is removable at any time for cause by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the address of the assembly;

—The FAO shall be selected by a panel composed of one member from each recognized party, and chaired by the Speaker who shall be a non-voting member.

Mandate:

Provide the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with independent analysis of the state of the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies, including the budget; and

at the request of a committee or member of the assembly shall:

(a) undertake research into the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies; and

(b) undertake research into the estimates and all legislation of the government and opposition members; and

(c) undertake research to estimate the financial cost of any proposal that would impact the province's finances and that relates to a matter over which the Legislature has jurisdiction, including government agencies and ministries;

Power to decline:

The FAO may decline any assignment by a committee or member of the assembly.

However, priority to undertake an assignment shall be given to matters over which the Legislature has jurisdiction including government agencies and ministries and government legislation.

Access to financial and economic information:

The FAO is entitled to have free and timely access to any financial or economic information belonging to or used by a ministry, agency of the crown or crown-controlled corporation that the financial accountability officer believes to be necessary to perform his or her duties under this section.

Exceptions shall include:

(a) any financial or economic information that is personal health information under the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004;

(b) personal information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or that is a cabinet

record that is exempt for the purposes of section 12 of that act.

Privilege:

No waiver of privilege:

A disclosure to the financial accountability officer does not constitute a waiver of solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or settlement privilege.

Proceedings privileged:

No proceedings lie against the FAO, or against any person holding any office or appointment under the FAO, for anything he or she may do or report or say in the course of the exercise or intended exercise of his or her functions, unless it is shown that he or she acted in bad faith.

And that the order for second reading of the bill shall be called at the outset of morning orders of the day two sessional days following introduction of the bill; in the event that the second sessional day is a Monday, the bill shall be called at the outset of afternoon orders of the day; and

Two hours shall be allotted to the second reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

The committee is authorized to meet for two sessional days for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, commencing on the third sessional day after the bill is referred to the committee, as follows: from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; and

The committee is authorized to meet for one sessional day for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on the third sessional day following the day on which the committee met for public hearings as follows: from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; and

The deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 5 p.m. on the sessional day before clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

The committee shall report the bill to the House on the third sessional day following the day on which the committee met for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That upon receiving the report of the committee, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading.

In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the first sessional day following clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House and shall be deemed to be ordered for third reading; and

The order for third reading of the bill shall then immediately be called and two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally

among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings in the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes; and

In the event of prorogation, the order in this section to the Minister of Finance shall endure and the bill and every schedule in it shall be introduced no later than the third sessional day of the third session of the 40th Parliament, and the other timelines in this section shall continue to apply.

Should prorogation occur after introduction of the bill, the bill shall be continued and placed on the Orders and Notices paper of the second sessional day of the subsequent session at the same stage as the prorogation, and the bill shall resume its progression through the House according to the timelines of this order; and

The commencement clause of the bill and of any schedule thereto shall provide for its coming into force in its entirety on the day it receives royal assent; and

The bill shall be presented to the Lieutenant Governor for royal assent before the House adjourns on the day it receives third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Milloy has moved government motion 19. Mr. Milloy.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My intention this evening is not to speak for very long. In fact, I don't think there will be a lot of people on our side who will speak for very long, because this is a procedural motion.

I'll just outline very briefly for the House what it does. Although it took a long time for me to read it, in fact the outcome is very simple.

We have before this House a number of issues related to the budget. One is the budget motion, where a debate has just been finished, and in fact there will be a vote on it tomorrow; the second is the budget bill, Bill 65.

As you know, Madam Speaker, and as members know, in the last number of weeks we've had 11 hours of debate on this bill. I think most observers would say that it's time to move forward with it, have it go to committee to be dealt with at committee, to deal with the public hearings and amendments, and to be reported back for third reading.

The reason why we're putting forward this motion—the first part is because it outlines a smooth path for this bill to go to a second reading vote, to be dealt with at committee in a reasonable length of time, and then to come back here for, again, a reasonable debate around third reading.

As members are aware, things have not been as smooth throughout this spring. On a number of government bills that have been brought forward, we have seen extraordinarily long debates. We've seen, really, filibustering by members of this House.

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I'll give you examples, Madam Speaker. Bill 11, the air ambulance act, was debated for 19 hours and 14 minutes. I think that any observer of this place would know that that's an extraordinary length of time in terms of a second reading. I will pick two pieces of legislation that don't have much controversy associated with them. Bill 14, the co-op housing act, 15 hours and 50 minutes, and Bill 36, the Local Food Act, 20 hours and 35 minutes.

The first part of this motion that we're putting forward today will allow for a smooth transition of this bill. As I say, Madam Speaker, we have already had 11 hours of debate. Members have been able to pronounce themselves on it, and they will certainly, if this passes and it moves through, have opportunities to speak to it at committee and through the third reading.

The second part of the motion that we put forward this afternoon deals with a financial accountability officer. I think members are aware of a proposal that was actually brought forward by the third party in the course of our budget negotiations for something like a parliamentary budget officer as they have in Ottawa and, in fact, in other jurisdictions across North America, an independent officer of the House who would, in a sense, look forward. I think the best way to explain it is that as the Auditor General, another officer of this House, looks backwards, a parliamentary budget officer looks forward and would be a third-party resource to all members of this Legislature when they have questions about estimates and costs related to initiatives and programs etc. that are dealt with by this government.

What this motion does, as well as furnishing a smooth passage of the budget, is that it mandates that the government commit in black and white, and by an order of this House, to come forward with legislation soon after we return this fall. Certainly, on the government side, we are very pleased to do that. I know that my colleague the Minister of Finance has already started to turn his attention—as he would be the sponsor of the bill—to what a bill might look like: as I say, modelled a bit on what's happened in Ottawa, but with a made-in-Ontario seal of approval; a bill which, in fact, would obviously come before this Legislature, and members would have a chance to comment on it.

What's at stake here? Why the rush or the urgency? I think the first part—and obviously, we've just finished eight hours of debate on the budget motion, as members are aware—is that this is a very important budget. We want to get on with it. We want to see the implementation of key parts, but in particular, the bill, which is the enabling document of the motion, contains a number of time-sensitive items that we would like to see pass this Legislature, if it's the will of the Legislature, sooner rather than later.

The most major one is an increase in the Ontario Child Benefit, which on July 1, 2013, if the bill were to pass, would go to \$1,210 and, under provisions of the bill, in the following year, 2014, to \$1,310. We have an urgency

to pass this bill so that it could go into effect as planned in the budget.

The second item that I will draw members' attention to—as I say, the entire bill is important, and we want to get it through, but there are some very specific time-sensitive matters—is changes around the Ontario Trillium Benefit. We heard from many Ontarians that this benefit, which in the past has been paid on a monthly basis—people want the option of receiving it in a lump sum. That would require us working with the Canada Revenue Agency, and again, it takes a great deal of time to have the systems in place, so we want to be able to officially go to the Canada Revenue Agency as soon as possible.

I could also mention or reference the important work that we have asked FSCO through this bill, if it passes, to do in terms of auto insurance. Again, time is of the essence. These are very complicated processes, these are very complicated subject matters, and the more time that we can give an agency such as FSCO to begin this process, the better.

I'll make one final reference, to permanently dedicating two cents of the gas tax each year to municipalities for public transportation, another item of certainty that is contained in this bill; I am sure that municipalities would want to see it go through as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, I realize that, according to the rules of the Legislature, I could speak for an hour.

Interjection: Go ahead.

Hon. John Milloy: No. I've only spoken for six or seven minutes because this is a procedural motion. We, of course, welcome debate on it. But it's a procedural motion, Madam Speaker, and as I say, it's to create a very smooth transition for a very important piece of legislation on the one hand, and also commit the government to move forward on another very important initiative, the creation of a financial accountability officer, or in lay terms, a parliamentary budget officer, as has been outlined—the framework has been outlined in this motion.

We look forward to debate and discussion on this, but we certainly are anxious to move on with it. I think the people of Ontario and those who will benefit from the budget initiatives are anxious that this Legislature deal with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to talk about the programming motion that has just been introduced by the government House leader. Since becoming House leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I've learned, especially in a minority Parliament, that in order to make it work, you have to talk to your counterparts on the other side of the aisle. That's not happening, Madam Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just want to say, while he's chirping up there, that I enjoy working with Mr. Milloy, the government House leader. He's a much more affable fellow and House leader than the previous one, I can tell

you that. And I enjoy working with the House leader of the NDP. Gilles Bisson, the member from northern Ontario, is a terrific fellow and enjoyable to talk to. I don't mind buying him a beer once in a while and having a chat with him.

But again, they have to talk to us, not have secret talks amongst themselves, which lead to today's programming motion, and then go out in the hallway, as the government House leader did a few hours ago in a scrum, and indicate that the PCs are holding everything up and that we're not co-operating. Well, co-operation is a two-way street, and you haven't talked to us about this motion. You haven't talked to us about our ideas around the budget; that was clear. You haven't talked with us in any way about moving forward in this Legislature since I've been House leader.

When Dalton McGuinty prorogued this House back in October 2012 to escape further scrutiny—took off with his tail between his legs to save what was left of his party and his own reputation—the main issue at the time was he was afraid to be accountable for the gas plant scandal, for Ornge, for eHealth and on and on and on. The Liberals took an unprecedented four-month soul-searching journey to find themselves a new leader—unprecedented. They closed the place down for four months. I've never seen that in my 23 years. There's nothing in the annals of the history of this place to indicate that that ever happened before. To do such a selfish act, to close this place down so the party could, as he said, lower the conversation, lower the tone, to run away, scared to face the accountability of this Legislature, is shameful.

I tell you, for you to expect us to come back here in a minority government after proroguing for four months and just blankly say yes to everything you ask for and vote on everything you ask for—that may be the NDP's way of propping up a government that's been more than honest with the people of Ontario, a scandal-plagued government, but it's not our way. My constituents told me—I can remember standing in the grocery store in Wasaga Beach, and two people, two couples, coming up to me and saying, "When you go back"—this was at Christmastime—"don't reward bad behaviour." It's disgusting what Dalton McGuinty did in October of last year. So keep that in mind as we debate every bill and every motion on this side of the House, which is our right to do.

One thing I note about Premier Wynne is her love for conversations. We hear that all the time. She acknowledged that her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, seemed to rule autocratically, and she promised to be different. She promised to engage, to converse, to listen and to stop the chest-pounding here in the Legislature. I was somewhat impressed, and I think the people of Ontario were impressed that things might be different. I figured the House leader stonewalling that I had experienced under Dalton McGuinty might come to an end.

Remember, since the 2011 election, they still haven't figured out that it's a minority government. You have to talk to all parties in the House. You have to make deals,

as it were, to get things through, and you actually have to come and ask us what we need to better serve the people of Ontario. What do we need? For example, I'm sitting here with the member for Leeds–Grenville, who has a perfectly good bill that would serve the people of Ontario tremendously well, that would serve medical professions, the dental professions, and allow them to treat their spouses and their families and not be illegal, especially in rural or remote parts of the province where they may be the only practitioner in town. That's a perfectly good bill. 1730

Or we have a motion on the table that was passed on May 16 here in this Legislature by all three parties, a passed motion from the member from Whitby–Oshawa, Christine Elliott, that calls upon this place to establish an all-party select committee to look into developmental services in the province of Ontario. We all agreed on it. Do you think Mr. Milloy, the government House leader, has come over and said, "Jim, if we helped you out and establish that select committee, would you speed up the budget debate a little bit?" You know, we're willing to talk about that. If you want to talk about Mr. Clark's bill that's on the table and that's all ready to go, we're happy to talk about that. There are a number of things that I'll get to near the end of my remarks that we're happy to talk about, that Mr. Milloy knows about. So don't be fooled, folks, that they're talking to us. They're not talking to us, so we see no reason at this time to step back and let you two have your way. We have a right to debate. We will take that right, and we will debate till the cows come home, if that's what you want.

So back to Premier Wynne and her conversations. I thought, as I said, that the stonewalling and the autocratic rule of Premier Dalton McGuinty would come to an end perhaps with the rhetoric I was hearing—it turned out to be rhetoric—from Premier Wynne, because at the House leaders' level, nothing has changed. There's no new government, there's no new approach to dealing with Her Majesty's loyal official opposition—nothing has changed. The proof is in the pudding.

She was having conversations, though. Everywhere you turned, Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals seemed to be in deep conversation. She had conversations with her leadership rivals. She tried to convince Sandra Pupatello to become finance minister, but instead opted for second best. After demoting the only Liberal minister who had held the line on freezing wages to the intergovernmental affairs portfolio, Premier Wynne had conversations with teachers. Those conversations must have gone well, because hundreds of millions of dollars later, the love of teachers was bought again as the Liberals retreated from their very own Bill 115.

Then the Liberals had conversations with LCBO workers, to give them more money; and the Liberals had conversations with Pat Dillon from the Working Families Coalition to, no doubt, assure their union buddies that, "All is good and well with the Liberals. We really haven't changed, folks. We just use that in our speeches and we just use that in our emails and we just use that in

the titles of our press releases, but nothing has changed, Mr. Dillon. All is good and well. We're still with you and, by the way, could you please, once again, spend up to \$10 million trying to defeat Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs through your advertising campaigns on TV," which, Madam Speaker, any human being on this planet knows is unfair. That's more than the NDP spent on their entire advertising budget in the last campaign—I think it's more than they spent on the entire campaign—and we have these third-party interest groups which are illegal federally. We've asked the government to do something about that. Mr. Hudak, the leader of our party, has sat down with Ms. Wynne, the Premier, and asked specifically that that be dealt with in a fair manner. That's been rejected, of course, by the government.

There were conversations between Premier Wynne and the Liberals and OPSEU, and again likely for more money, but we're just not sure of the details of all of those conversations.

Then came the conversations with the NDP. That is where the NDP sold their souls, I regrettably say. When the Liberals dropped \$1 billion cancelling the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville to save five Liberal seats, that was \$200 million to save their political skins, so \$200 million per seat is \$1 billion.

But the NDP sold out on this budget deal and this programming motion we have before us for a few trinkets in the budget: more spending, more waste, adding to our debt—as we say, a daughter born tomorrow has \$20,000 on her back, worse than California, California being the most indebted state in the United States, worse than any province in Canada. We are heading towards Greece, folks, and you heard it here first from the PC Party.

Of course the Liberals have promptly agreed to every demand in order to cling to power, every NDP demand there was. So Speaker, the conversations with the NDP must have gone really well. We were shut out of the process—fine. It's not what you say in the hallways, but that is the truth. The NDP was convinced to sell their 18 seats for only \$55.5 million per seat—quite a bargain in comparison to the Liberals. Well, shame on the NDP. Shame on the NDP for selling themselves so cheaply—but I digress, Madam Speaker. Back to the issue at hand: this programming motion.

For all the conversations the Liberals have had, for all the claims of Premier Wynne to want to make this Legislature work, the one party and the one group—and I repeat—that the Liberals have not talked to is the official opposition. Sure, the Liberals will say, "Well the Tories said they would oppose the budget." That is true. Given the throne speech of Premier Wynne, it was clear from day one of the new Liberal government that it was not new at all. It was clear that Premier Wynne would continue on the same reckless path of overspending and debt as Premier McGuinty. It was clear from day one that Premier Wynne was not going to follow the advice of Liberal-appointed Don Drummond.

That all said, Madam Speaker, I was certain that my good friend, my colleague from across the way, the

government House leader, Mr. Milloy, would reach out to me as official opposition House leader at some point. While we've not always agreed, I figured, per the tradition of this place, and despite our decision not to support the Liberal-NDP budget, as always is the case at the end of the spring session, the official opposition was willing to work with the government to get things through the House in the best interest of Ontarians.

But did the government reach out to the PCs to try and have a conversation? Did the government reach out to the PCs to try and get the co-operative housing act passed, which they have promised to stakeholders? No. No. No such conversation. The Liberals are silent.

Did the government reach out to the PCs to try and get the court security act passed? No. No such conversation. Again, the Liberals are silent.

Did the government reach out to the Progressive Conservatives to try and get the Local Food Act passed? I remind you, Madam Speaker, the Local Food Act, the Premier's signature bill in her dual role as Minister of Agriculture and Food, we are told is very important to the Premier—I should say, the part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food. We're told it's very important to her personally and she would like to get it through this session, so you would think that the Liberals would want this act to pass to help Ontario farmers. We're prepared to pass it with some minor amendments proposed by my friend here from Sarnia-Lambton. But nope; no such conversation or outreach by the governing Liberals.

Did the Liberals try and reach out to the Progressive Conservatives to try and get the select committee struck into developmental services, put forward in a motion passed on May 16 by my colleague Christine Elliott from Whitby-Oshawa, which her own members—again all-party support—and the NDP supported? Nope. No conversations there either.

Did the Liberals try and reach out to the PCs to try and get the John Paul II bill passed? Again, it's a bill we've all agreed should go through. Once again, no conversation either.

As we draw to the end of a long session, there are often divisions about getting the House to rise on time, to ensure no bell-ringing and to limit night or midnight sittings. Well, guess what, Madam Speaker? No conversation there either.

Now you might say, as I've said before, conversations are a "two-way" street, or at least I always thought the word meant that two of you were talking—at least two of you. In my family of seven, there were usually seven talking at once, and we called that a conversation, but I digress. Shouldn't the PCs try and have such conversations? Well, we've tried but we've been met with a closed door.

So what are we left to do? Well, we're left with few options but to remind this government they do not have a majority, and stop acting like you have a majority. We're left with few options but to remind this government that they do not have a majority, and this is a minority Parliament, not one of their making—I'm sure they would have

liked it to go another way, as we would have liked it to go another way—but the making of the people of Ontario, the wishes of the people of Ontario. The electorate has spoken. Yes, we should try and make this place work but, again, conversations are needed.

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Of the 13 bills the government has on the order paper, which I might add is a pathetic legislative agenda, you would think that the five of the 13 that are Dalton McGuinty retreads the government would want cleared. You would think that the five other bills that are new to the Wynne government, that they would want those passed also. I think they want these bills, but I don't know because, once again, no one is talking to us about these bills from the Liberals. They do their talking through the media and in the hallway.

Well, ignore us at your peril is what I say to the Liberals. We have a strong caucus, a determined caucus, an experienced caucus, a caucus that has shown you, every step of the way, since you arrogantly started running this place after the 2011 election in a minority Parliament—your approach has been arrogant, and we have tried, yes, to thwart you at every step by having us debate every bill, and we'll continue to do that until you have a conversation with us directly.

There are some very simple things that we are asking for, like the select committee, like Mr. Clark's bill. We even have a first responders act that everybody agrees with, put forward by the member from Newmarket–Aurora, that we're happy to discuss with you. We have Mr. Hardeman's bill—the member for Oxford—dealing with CO₂, which was part of an agreement that you've yet to live up to.

I'll give you one thing. Before prorogation, we did have an all-party agreement—by the way, by unanimous consent, so it's not like we're stuck in the mud and don't do this. We showed you last year that we're quite capable of a programming motion that we all agree on, that gets us out of here without bell-ringing and nonsense or things that border on being unparliamentary, but you drive people to that because, again, you do not talk to them; you do not have the conversation.

We are quite capable of doing unanimous consent programming motions. We proved it. Just to go back—I'll give you credit—Mr. Bailey, the member for Sarnia–Lambton, his “call before you dig” —

Mr. Robert Bailey: One Call.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —One Call act went through. But there were two more as part of that deal, and they were Mr. Clark's, the member for Leeds–Grenville, and Mr. Hardeman, the member for Oxford. I'm trying to be very parliamentary today by remembering their riding names, too, just so you don't have to get too upset at me, Madam Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: And One Call was done. Obviously, you're capable of living up to one third of a three-bill agreement, so we'd just like to talk to you about living up to the rest of it. It can't be one-sided. It can't be, “We

want you to do this programming motion. We want out of here June 6. We don't want night sittings. We want the Local Food Act. We want the co-operative housing act. We want the court security act. We want the highway traffic amendment for municipalities to collect fees act,” but never ask us, “What do you want?” We're not asking for—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, it's not rocket science. I wish Mr. Delaney was here, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

But the fact of the matter is, we're not asking for anything difficult. In fact, most of our asks have already gone through this place. Take the two bills of the member for Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, and Mr. Clark, the member from Leeds–Grenville: They've actually gone not just through committee and that, they've gone to the ministries. So the government has gone over them word for word. The government lawyers have gone through them. Why can't we move forward?

Instead, you bring through this draconian secret deal with the NDP, because we were shut out of the talks. You didn't even try to talk to us in the last two weeks. So don't go out in the hallway, as you constantly do—because I'll be out there too, all of us, and we'll be telling the truth, and that is, “They never ask us what we want to get this thing rolling around here, and we have reasonable requests.” We have to go back and face our constituents, too, who say, “What did you do this session?” “Well, we have some pretty good bills and some pretty reasonable requests.”

Madam Speaker, I don't understand. It's tradition around here, except with these guys, that we talk about whether we're going to have committees sit in the summer. We already have one request; it's here in my House leader's book, a letter from—what's Bas's riding?

Interjection: Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —Scarborough–Rouge River, as Chair of the general government committee, so a Liberal Chair of the committee. The Liberal Chair has written to me and to Mr. Bisson, the NDP House leader, and to the government House leader to ask for four days of travel and sitting during the summer. So there's an all-party—and there are many more requests coming from the other committees who have already asked. Are there any conversations about that? No. Maybe there will be at House leaders' this Thursday. I hope so.

The fact of the matter is that is a request from members of all sides. It's not just a PC request. That's one thing we would like to talk about. Committees have to be able to sit this summer.

You can't expect us to let you get away with the biggest scandal in Canadian history. It amazes me—and as an aside, yes, the Senate is in trouble, and Rob Ford is in trouble, but the biggest scandal is here. It may not get the media attention every day, although I think it will. I think it will. The privacy commissioner, Ms. Cavoukian, came out today and gave a hint of her report coming forward. There's a CP story on it, and there's a Globe

and Mail story on it that I just read about senior Liberal staffers—one being a chief of staff—purposely destroying documents.

That's against the law. We're not just talking about sneaky buying Liberal seats in the last election, which should be a Criminal Code matter but apparently isn't. We're not just talking about contempt of probably up to 10 ministers, including Minister Wynne, when she was a minister, who got up in this Legislature and said one of the scandals was only \$40 million—Oakville—when we know we're close to \$700 million now. On that one alone, I think we're—what are we on Oakville alone?

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's several times, 19 times the \$40 million, and yet they consistently said one thing in this Parliament. Now, it's interesting in this whole gas plant thing: We can't get the Premier to admit when she was told it's going to be more than \$40 million. That's key to contempt, because if she knew—now, we know she chaired the cabinet committee. We know she signed off on the cabinet minute to verify that that minute is accurate. We know she would have been briefed both as Chair and as a member of the cabinet committee that approved the Oakville gas plant cancellation.

Surely to goodness, we have cabinet ministers over there that are at least responsible enough to say during that meeting, "How much is this going to cost?" Surely to goodness, if they were listening to the people at the OPA—many of whom I know; they were former Hydro people when I was Minister of Energy.

I know Colin Andersen would have told them the truth. I know that for a fact. He was a senior civil servant in our government, and he made it through the ranks up through previous governments. We relied on him to give us accurate figures when he was an associate deputy minister at the Ministry of Finance. He, more often than the Deputy Minister of Finance during the Harris-Eves government, was the fellow who would brief cabinet on where we were with deficits and debts and whether our spending was on track and our savings on track. I know him to be a good man.

I felt horrible that you put him up at committee the first time to lowball the figures, lowball what advice he gave. Basically, when they had their press conference there, he and the chair of the OPA, I felt sorry for them. Colin Andersen is a loyal civil servant. He will do what the government tells him.

When he finally got back with a little more freedom, because you had been caught with your pants down, everybody knew—and he confirmed at the end of his testimony when he came back to the committee that everybody knew it was more than \$40 million.

If you didn't tell the truth to Parliament, including Premier Wynne when she was minister, and again chair of the cabinet committee, we still have the issue of contempt to deal with. Should we allow a Parliament to not tell the truth about factual matters?

Maybe it's not this scandal—but we can't let this scandal go by, because what about the future? As Mr.

Hudak, leader of the PCs, says, if we let you away with this, you'll do it again and again and again.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Rewarding bad behaviour.

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Mr. Jim Wilson: It's rewarding bad behaviour, as my colleague says.

My point in all that was that we need committees to sit in the summer. I know that the NDP would agree with that, but the track we're on—you rascals are going to take off, or try and take off, with the help of the NDP and close this place down; we'll have no Ornge committee and no gas plant committee. We have a very serious issue that they're dealing with downstairs in the committee rooms on the pharmaceutical cancer drugs issue. We'd like to have a committee on developmental services. We still haven't gotten to the bottom of eHealth; that's still coming around. We know that the auditor is going to bring forward another report on the gas plant, this time dealing with the true cost of Oakville.

There's lots of the people's work to be done. Through this programming motion, you're trying to squirm out of all of that. If we have to sit here, as it's said, until the cows come home, that's what we'll do, I guess. It's the only tool we have. It's a legitimate tool.

We tried our want of confidence motion. One of the things I'd like to discuss is that we think that with all of these scandals, a confident government would have the confidence of the House. In fact, the tradition in a minority is that it does get tested from time to time. Sure, majority governments will allow the opposition to have their want of confidence motions because they know what the outcome is ahead of time, but it's also a tradition from time to time in a minority to test that.

We tried to do that with my motion earlier this month in, I thought, a rather interesting way—a way that probably sets a precedent, although I'm not sure; I'd have to defer to the table—in terms of Mr. Clark's opposition day motion to order the three House leaders to set a date for the debate and vote on the want of confidence motion. Of course, the want of confidence motion, for those at home, deals with the gas plant scandal primarily, and says that because of all these scandals, we don't think the government is ruling legitimately. We don't think it has the legitimate support of the people of Ontario. We can test that through an election, if you'd like, or we can do it here in the House with a want of confidence motion.

In a few minutes, Madam Speaker, I will be moving an amendment to this programming motion that will ask the government and the third party to bring back our want of confidence motion and to include it as part of this motion.

I just want to mention a couple of other people in terms of a conversation I'd also like to have. It goes back to gas plants again. We have a former minister, Bentley, clearly under oath to cover up a massive scandal and withhold documents covered by a committee of this Legislature. We can't let this pass. This is a court of law when it decides to act as a court of law. If you did that in front of a judge—if she said to you, "You need to

produce documents. You need to produce a person. You need to produce things,” and you say, “The heck with you, Your Honour,” I think Her Honour would say, “There’s the jail cell. Officer, take this plaintiff to jail.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: You want him to go to jail? Is that what you’re suggesting?

Mr. Jim Wilson: No, we’re not suggesting Mr. Bentley should go to jail, but maybe some of you other people should, you know.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, there will be one big political jail cell for the whole heck of you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask that the conversation go through the Chair.

Continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I don’t think it will come to that, but the fact of the matter is that we need the committees to keep doing their work and get to the bottom of it. The Premier has said, time and time again, that she wants to get to the bottom of it, but again, actions speak louder than words. She’s not a new government; she acts the same way as the old government. They say one thing. It sounds great. It gets reported in the Toronto Star, mainly. Then when we actually have House leaders’, none of these things are talked about. I bring them up; Mr. Bisson brings some of this stuff up as House leader for the NDP; and it just doesn’t get done.

We want to have a conversation about Bob Delaney, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, comparing the gas plant scandal to the cost of the American moon landing. You just threw the dice, I guess, when you made this horrendous decision, didn’t bother to figure out what the cost was, and said, “We will save our political seats regardless of the cost.” Clearly, it was two weeks left in the last election, the 2011 election. They obviously saw the same polls that everybody else saw and that were reported widely in the media, that they were headed towards either a loss or a clear minority—not even a slim majority—so they had to buy some seats. We cannot allow any political party to buy seats in an election, and that is, plain and simple, what it is.

You knew you were doing things wrong, because you knew the government can’t spend large amounts of money; the civil service won’t allow cabinet to do that during an election. So you announced the cancellation of Oakville on Liberal Party letterhead, to skirt the rules.

We could see at the time what you were doing. You were going to spend an awful pile of money—although I don’t know if everybody knew it was going to be this amount of money—and you were doing it in the sneakiest way possible. You have to be held accountable for that.

As House leader, Madam Speaker, I’m not prepared, and we’re not prepared—I speak on behalf of all of our caucus and Tim Hudak, our leader—to let another week of mistruths and political interference go by.

Premier Wynne says that the budget motion is the only test of confidence the House needs. Well, she’s wrong,

and frankly, she’s wrong to have even the audacity to say that that’s the only want of confidence we need and the only one we’re going to have—how unparliamentary and disrespectful of the rules. A very legitimate tool in our tool box, that is used by parties in both minority and majority Parliaments in those situations, is the want of confidence test, and we demand that we have that want of confidence test.

But again, it will be part of a conversation that we would like to have with the government, and we don’t want to have it through the media—although if that’s the way they want to do it, I’m as good at it as anybody else, and so is every member of our caucus.

The fact of the matter is, we don’t have to go to the wall as parties. We can make this thing work. I’ve given you just about 99% of our list that I can think of—I kind of had to make up notes rather quickly in the last few hours—and we’re willing to talk about whatever you want to talk about. But the fact of the matter is, we’re not going to support this programming motion that was done in secret and behind our backs, nor should we be expected to support this motion. I think that’s fair.

Again, we’ll have all the conversations you want. We don’t have to stay here all summer. If you want to stay here all summer, we’ll stay here all summer, even if it’s just me and a few good colleagues stuck here all summer.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We’ll be here—and the Clerk.

Mr. Jim Wilson: We’ll be here—and the Clerk. I think it’s overtime for the Clerk, at that point, and her fellow elves.

In my last two minutes, Madam Speaker, I move that the programming motion be amended by adding the following:

Adding a new section, entitled “Section D: Want of confidence,” and that the new section include the following sentence:

“That the want of confidence motion, standing in the name of the member from Simcoe–Grey, shall be called for debate and a vote no later than June 6, 2013.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Wilson has moved that the motion be amended as follows:

Adding a new section, entitled “Section D: Want of confidence,” and that the new section include the following sentence:

“That the want of confidence motion, standing in the name of the member from Simcoe–Grey, shall be called for debate and a vote no later than June 6, 2013.”

Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Madam Speaker, I hope the government will take the amendment into consideration. As I said, we look forward to having some legitimate conversations with them about making this place work.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

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Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 29 May 2013

Mercredi 29 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 28, 2013, on the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I'm going to be taking most of my time on this debate this morning in order to raise a number of issues and to go through a couple of things that I think need to be talked about in regard to where we're at.

What's clear is that about a year and a half ago—back in October 2011, I believe the date was—we had an election. The people, during that election said, listen, they didn't want to return a majority government back to this Legislature; in fact they had decided that it was time to have a minority government because they weren't prepared to give (1) a re-election victory to the McGuinty government at the time and (2) they certainly weren't prepared to give a majority government to the Conservatives and were not about to do the same to us. So they decided, in their wisdom—because the public is always infinitely more wise than we give them credit for—that it was going to be a minority Parliament that was going to return to the Legislature for the next little while. They asked—by way of their franchise, by way of the vote—that what we should be doing is trying to figure out how we get together and figure out how we do the work of the people, so that we do what's right for them, not necessarily what's right for the political parties.

We've been here now for about a year and a half, a little bit more than that, and it's been quite an interesting time. You had, first of all, a McGuinty government that came back and said they were into a "major minority." They decided that they were going to strictly try to rule as if they were in a majority and forget what the people had told them. At the time, I remember hearing those comments from the Premier, actually being at some of those scrums. And my comment—as it was with Andrea Horwath and others—was that was wrong, that in the end we should always respect what the people of Ontario have to say, and that the voters are the people who decide

what's to happen here for the next four years or whatever amount of time it is, if it's a minority government. For Mr. McGuinty on the day to say that he was going to act as if there was a majority flew in the face, quite frankly, of what the people of Ontario had asked for in that election.

We spent the better part of a year—a little bit more than a year, maybe a couple of months—working under that scenario, where the government was trying to act as if it was a majority. Andrea Horwath and New Democrats said, "Whoa. Just wait a second here." The people of Ontario didn't give the government a majority. They didn't give any party a majority. They sent us here, and they said, "Be humbled, for a change, and go and do what needs to be done for the people of Ontario."

So we went into the budget cycle last year with that in mind, and Andrea Horwath said, "No, Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals, you're not just going to get what you normally want to get as a majority. You're going to have to take into account what the people of Ontario have to say."

So we went into a budget cycle, and everybody knows what happened through that particular cycle. We amended essentially what was an austerity budget on the part of the McGuinty government and put in place the measures that made the budget more acceptable to the people of Ontario.

Was it a great budget? Absolutely not. There were many components in that budget that we still take offence at: what the government tried to do with the horse racing industry and what the government is trying, or tried, to do with the ONTC, just to name a few. But we managed to put some fairness into that budget.

I think one of the key ones was making sure that it's not always the working class and the working poor who pay all the taxes in this province. That's what we've been seeing over the years. We've been seeing that the top 10% earners in the province of Ontario, as across most of Canada, have been doing better over the last number of years, while the rest, the 90%, are doing worse, when it comes to real income brought home and when it comes to the amount of taxes they have to pay. Those at the top 10% are paying less taxes than they used to 10 years before, and those below—the 90%, the rest of us—are paying more. We said that's patently unfair.

So we put in place what we call the millionaire's tax, which essentially says that anybody over \$500,000 in income would have to pay an extra 2% in income tax. That raised some \$600 million to \$700 million for the province of Ontario that we were then able to put into

home care, that we were then able to put into making sure we had a better health care system, making sure that our kids can go to school and, more importantly, making sure that we don't raise the deficit needlessly in order to make sure we're on track to be able to balance the budget by 2017.

If it hadn't been for New Democrats in the last budget, the fiscal picture today, as far as the Ontario budget, would be that much worse. It was New Democrats who actually tempered the government in what they were doing and, in fact, got some revenue that was very much needed in order to be able to offset the cost of doing business here in Ontario, as far as the services we deliver as an Ontario government and, at the same time, making sure that everybody paid a fairer share of the cost of the services that people get.

I remember, at the time, the Conservative Party said, "Oh my God, the only way you can deal with this is to vote down the government and call an election." That was their mantra back then, as it is now. And the thing that always struck me was that Tim Hudak and the Conservative Party never heard what Ontarians said to them back in October the year before. The people had said, "No, Tim Hudak, you're not going to be our Premier."

Tim Hudak had gone into that election—supposedly was going to become a majority government. What was clear, by the end of the election, after they looked at Tim Hudak a little bit closer, they said, "No, we don't want him as our Premier. What we want, at this point, is a pause so that we can figure out what's going on in Ontario politics," and they returned a minority government to this Legislature.

So I always thought it was rather rich that the Conservatives said last year, "Our only response to absolutely everything is two things: 'No' and 'I want an election.'" Well, what kind of constructive ideas are those? What kind of constructive solutions do they bring to the problems that face Ontarians?

There are some really serious problems that we have to deal with. There was a deficit, at that time, of almost \$17 billion that faced the province of Ontario. We still arguably have a deficit of around \$13 billion today. I think that when we start looking at really how much money the government saved last year with some of this privatization stuff around OLG and others—they've put those into their fiscal forecast—they're going to be quite surprised when they find out how much money they didn't get.

But the point is that the only solution the Tories brought to this was to say, "No, I don't want to play with you. No, I want to do my own thing. No, I believe in the fortunes of the Conservative Party, and all I want to do is get to government." Well, we've seen what a Mike Harris government is all about. We certainly are seeing what a Stephen Harper government is all about. We certainly don't need to learn positive experience from either of those elections. We see Stephen Harper, who campaigned on trust, campaigned on making things more accountable, and we then see people like Mike Duffy, and the Prime

Minister of Canada saying, "Oh, well, I think we've done as much as we can on this."

0910

You know, Tim Hudak's solution to say no to absolutely everything and to say the only thing that Ontarians need is an election is, I would argue, a pretty self-serving ask on the part of the Conservatives. They are clearly demonstrating that all that they want is to be able to do what's right for them and the Conservative Party. I don't believe for a second—I don't care what the polls say; those guys aren't getting elected in a majority government. It ain't happening. I think when the people look at these guys closely as we go into an election, whenever that might be, they are going to find out that the Tim Hudak of the election of 2011 has just gotten meaner and nastier, and quite frankly they are not going to return those guys in any form of a majority government.

We made a decision last year, as New Democrats. We said that we would in fact allow the budget to pass because of those concessions that we got from the Liberal government. We allowed that to pass by essentially abstaining on the vote, because we still believed there were parts of that budget that were problematic—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Gutless.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—but we had a responsibility to do what's right for the people of Ontario. As I listen to the whip of the Conservative Party call the New Democratic Party gutless, I just say that when people start resorting to those kinds of words and those kinds of allegations, it tells you that they have nothing to defend themselves and quite frankly are being pretty childish and irresponsible about the trust that the people have given them when they come into the Legislature. So I will take no lesson from the whip of the Conservative Party; that is for sure.

We then went through the budget process, and what was interesting in that budget process last year—and I remember well, because I was one of the ones who negotiated this, along with our chief of staff, along with the Liberal House leader and the Liberal chief of staff at the time, Mr. Morley—is that we had said to them, "Be clear; we are still going to amend your budget. And I'll tell you where we're going to amend it. We're going to amend it on the sections that deal with getting rid of wage-based arbitration for workers who don't have the right to strike because they're declared essential workers, such as police officers, such as firefighters and others." We said to the government in those meetings, and my leader Andrea Horwath said to the Premier before we finalized the deal, "You need to be clear. We are supporting your budget motion, but we will still amend your budget and those sections such as I mentioned." And the government said, "That's fine."

We ended up going into the budget process where we were into clause-by-clause for amendments and, lo and behold, the Conservatives became New Democrats in about two seconds. They decided that it was a bad idea to get rid of wage-based arbitration, and I was heartened, because I thought finally the Conservatives were starting to recognize that in a society you need to have rules that

are fair. If you're going to tell police officers and you're going to tell firefighters that they can't go on strike, you just can't take away the right to bargain, and the only right they have in bargaining is wage-based arbitration. I was heartened and I was glad and I couldn't believe it when the Conservatives said to us, "You know what? We're going to support your amendments, because we're going to make sure that the government doesn't pass those particular sections that got rid of wage-based arbitration."

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We'll get back to this in a second, in regard to the motivation of the Tories. But what was interesting was the response by then-finance minister Dwight Duncan. He professed how surprised he was: "Oh, my God. They've gone back on their word."

Mr. John Yakubuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member for Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Standing order 23, Speaker: In his own words, he's assigning motive to another party and members of that party in this chamber. In his own words, he is assigning motive. He should speak to the motive of his own party and himself as a member, but it is out of order to speak to the motive or impute the motive of another party under standing order 23.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your input. I believe it's his dime and he's allowed to talk the way he wants for 60 minutes, as long as I feel it's within the guidelines of what he should be talking about. As far as saying what your motive is, that's not really an attack on you; it's simply his interpretation of what he thinks you're thinking and doing. So I don't find that a point of order.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just have to say, Mr. Speaker, I've learned those motives of the Conservative Party over the last year attacking us and attacking others. Anyway, I'll just leave that at that.

My point was that then-Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan said, "Oh, my God, I'm so surprised. Oh, Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats are going back on their word." They played this silly little charade out, and eventually the public understood, I think, because if you looked at what happened afterwards—that we actually went up in the polls at the end of that budget cycle—that in a sense the government was trying to profess that we had broken a deal when we had done no such thing.

What had happened was the Conservatives had decided to play silly bugger in the budget process. Their argument—and I accept this, this was fair—was that gutting of the wage-based arbitration doesn't go far enough. "So because it doesn't go far enough, we're going to support yours to maintain what's in there now." I guess their thinking was that they would then be able to make an argument with AMO and other municipalities that the government would come back with some sort of other deal in the fall to really gut even more seriously the wage-based arbitration for police officers, firefighters

and other emergency workers. The fact that the Tories voted with the New Democrats I thought at first was because finally they were really starting to become the "progressive" part of the Conservatives. I later found out, and I was very disappointed, that in fact they were not being progressive; they just wanted to go further, deeper and harder. I just think that that is the wrong way to go.

And so we ended up passing the budget with those schedules taken out of the act, and then the finance minister, Mr. Duncan at the time, came back and said, "Well, we're just going to come back with legislation. We're going to fix this in the fall. What we've got to do is bring more legislation." At that time we—along with police officers, firefighters, ambulance workers and others who were essential workers—thought, "Whoa, hang on till this fall. It looks like the Tories have got a deal cooked up with the Liberals in order to gut the wage-based arbitration system." So we were waiting for that to happen.

But lo and behold, something happened in between the budget being passed in the spring of last year and what we found as far as the return of the House: There was a by-election. I thought this was rather interesting. The government, who had spent about eight years reaching out to people in the educational sector—teachers and others—decided that it would be to their political advantage in order to attack teachers in the by-election and to essentially say what they did. I thought that, boy, that was really, really bad, in my view, as far as a strategy, because number one, I thought most people would see it for what it was.

This was a case of the Liberals essentially trying to pick on teachers because they were in a by-election for a riding that had been held by Elizabeth Witmer, a member of the Conservative Party. They thought that, "If we go into a Conservative riding and we can show we're better Tories than the Tories who are there now, and we can be more regressive when it comes to teacher bargaining and show that we're tough against workers and teachers and educational workers," somehow or other that would be a good thing, because they would then be able to pick up the right-wing vote in that particular by-election. They would be able to bring back a Liberal, create a majority, and then go on their merry way and finish off with a majority government until whenever that ended. Well, that didn't quite work out the way they planned.

New Democrats found a great candidate in Catherine Fife. We ran an excellent campaign. We pointed out to the voters of Kitchener–Waterloo that in fact what the government was up to was that they were trying to play a Tory game in order to gain for themselves in the election their opportunity to be able to win that seat to win a majority. It was all about the Liberals doing what was right for them and what was politically expedient, not necessarily what the public wanted. Again, I go back to the point of this minority government: The people sent us back as a minority. Why? Because they expect us to work together and to try to find some commonality, understanding that at times we will disagree, which is fair enough. There are times that the Liberals, New Demo-

crats and Tories will disagree in some combination, and that's just fair. That's what happens here, but where we have commonality we should try to find a solution.

So we elected Catherine Fife. She came to this House. She has been a very effective representative for that Kitchener–Waterloo riding. She has been, by leaps and bounds, a real wonderful addition to our caucus with her intellect, her honesty and her approach, being a straight shooter when it comes to dealing with representing the people of that area.

That was also a wake-up call for the government. They recognized that they had a problem. They tried to play the right-wing card in the election game and it had backfired on them. In fact, the people of Kitchener–Waterloo said, “I like Andrea Horwath, I like the NDP and I really like Catherine Fife. I will bring them back to this Legislature in order to hold this government's feet to the fire.”

0920

Well, the response by the government was rather interesting. They came back. They found themselves embroiled in the scandal around the gas plants. It was clear that what the government was telling the people was not lockstep with what actually had happened. I guess that's parliamentary, Speaker. And what—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What?

Miss Monique Taylor: Bill 115.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, yes, I forgot about that. That's right; I should talk about that before I get to the other one. Thanks for that. That was really helpful.

Miss Monique Taylor: No problem, Brother.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Sister.

I'm going to digress for a second because we forget one very important thing: That was Bill 115. The government came back after the by-election and did a time allocation motion with the Tories in order to pass Bill 115, which was the legislation that essentially ripped up the bargaining process for teachers and imposed collective agreements on the teachers, rather than allowing them to negotiate their settlements, as that would be the case later. But what they did at the time is, they imposed those contracts by way of a piece of legislation called Bill 115 that came to this House. They were supported by the Conservatives not only in the bill, but they were also supported in time allocation. We New Democrats were alone to oppose that bill and voted against it.

But then the other part happened, which was the gas plants scandal. The government's only response when they found out the jig was up and that, in fact, they would be in a situation of having to deal with a contempt motion that was in the House was to prorogue. I think that was ill-advised.

I think the fact that the Premier resigned and that they were going to have a leadership race was one thing. That was his call; that was his choice. I respect him for it one way or another. Everybody should be able to make that decision on their own at one point. But they prorogued the House. I argued, at the time, as Andrea Horwath did,

that it didn't make any sense to prorogue the House to allow the Liberals to have a leadership race, because all that was doing was gaming the system for the Liberals.

While the Liberals were having a leadership race, they didn't have to be in the House answering questions at question period and dealing with the issue of contempt that was going through the House at the time. It was an attempt on the part of the Liberals to game the process so that, in fact, they would be in the situation of being able to keep all that pretty well subdued and out of the papers while they went through the leadership process.

I just think that the government and their acting and how they dealt with this minority Parliament in the first year left a lot to be desired, and I will argue it probably still does to an extent. But it was clear that the government was trying to game it for their own interests politically. I think that was wrong.

So here we are. We come back after the leadership race. A new leader of the Liberal Party is elected. She takes her office, and we're into another budget process. We get into this budget process, and Andrea Horwath was quite clear. She said, “Listen, I'm not going to have any negotiations or backroom deals made. I'm going to do this process very transparently. I'm going to do it openly so that the media and the public, through the media, are able to understand what it is that we as New Democrats want and what it is that the Liberals are prepared to do. And I will report at every step what it is that's going on and what it is that we're asking for.”

We put in place six asks. We said we want to have, first of all, a reduction in auto insurance. It is clear that people are being whacked when it comes to the price of auto insurance in this province. If we look at the examples that have been raised in the House yesterday in regard to people getting 15% and 20% increases on the part of their insurance companies—

Miss Monique Taylor: Thirty.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —and 30%, as I'm told, in another example, that is clearly unacceptable.

The public has come to a point where they can't afford to pay any more. Their wages are not keeping up with inflation, and what they're doing is, they're getting HST added onto them by the Liberal government. The insurance companies are increasing their rates on auto insurance. Cost is going up. The public has had it.

So we have said it's important that we have FSCO change the rules so that, in fact, there is a 15% reduction in auto insurance within a year. We thought that was a fair thing to do, considering that insurance companies had made \$2 billion in profit the previous year because the government had changed the rules to lessen the benefits that the insurance companies have to pay to accident victims, and rather than having that \$2 billion in profit, the government had said they were going to pass those savings on to the public and never did so. We were keeping the government to account to what it is they promised they would do two and three years before. So we asked for a 15% reduction in auto insurance.

We then said, “It's important that we have a youth jobs initiative,” so we asked for the First Start program.

The idea behind that is very simple: There's a lot of youth in all of our communities—it could be Cornwall, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Windsor or Toronto—where people have gone to school, they've gotten their training, but they don't have that first job that is related to what they studied. They can get a job in the service industry, but they can't necessarily easily get the job that they've trained for. We've said we need a First Start program that allows youth to be able to get into an employ where they're actually using the skills they were trained for, and that the employer gets some sort of help in order to make that happen. We put that on the table because we thought it's far better having our youth who have spent time in our post-secondary institutions to be working in the field that they chose than to be working in the service industry or in a job that they quite frankly didn't even go to school for. People should at least be able to get work in what they trained for.

We then said, "We have a problem in long-term care." There is an issue across this province where people are having to wait, to get long-term-care services, for the better part of 200-plus days to get an assessment, to have somebody dispatched to their home to get a bath, to have somebody come in and help them prepare their meals or do nursing services, or whatever it might be. Clearly, when you have that going on, it's a problem that the person who needs to be at home loses their independence, and it's a question that they want to stay at home but are then forced back into an institution at a much higher cost, and it's somewhere that they don't want to be. So we've asked for a five-day guarantee on an assessment, and we've said that would be a fair thing to do. The cost of that was about \$30 million or \$35 million.

We then said, "Listen, it's patently unfair that you've put the HST and charged it to workers and families out there, and at the same time you're going to be giving the richest companies in our province the ability to write off all their HST inputs, starting sometime next year." The cost of that is \$1.3 billion—and again, it goes back to the point that the top 10% of our population are making more money and paying less taxes while the rest of the 90% are making less money and paying more taxes. It's patently unfair. We have said we need to put an end to this. Everybody has to pay their fair share.

I go back to the debate in regard to transit. I listened to the government say, "Oh, the New Democrats, they don't want transit." Horse feathers. Our party has always been a party that supported the issue of proper transit within a city, and intercity transportation between cities like Hamilton and Toronto and others. But it's a question of how to pay for it. It seems to us there's a pretty evident thing here that the government says, "Go and do tolls or increase the HST or increase the price of gas," which is a hit on hard-working people and our economy, or we can say, "Let's just not give the \$1.3-billion tax loophole to these companies that are going to get it in a year's time." There's \$1.3 billion—not too hard to figure out—and then we can make the investment that needs to be made when it comes to transit in cities like Toronto and the corridors between our cities coming into Toronto.

More importantly, there's the ability to provide services such as snowplowing in northern Ontario, making sure that roads are not washed out like we saw last week-end in the Wawa area, making sure that we put in passing lanes where they're necessary, and supporting public infrastructure like the ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, that runs the train in northern Ontario.

We have said those are some of the things that we want in the budget. The government responded over time and gave us pretty well everything we asked for. I was a bit surprised. You know, I've been around for a while, knowing you put forward your ideas, the government responds, you normally get some of them, and then you have a decision: Is it enough?

Well, I give the government some credit: They gave us everything we asked for. Andrea Horwath led; Kathleen Wynne followed. I think that was a very, very good thing for Ontario, and it's not about—

Mr. John Yakabuski: She wrote the budget.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, we didn't write the budget, but we certainly inserted the major parts of the budget. The budget was written by the current Minister of Finance and his people, but we inserted—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Andrea was looking over his shoulder.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I love my friend from the Conservative Party, the whip, because—oh, I won't even bother. 0930

Anyway, my point is that we essentially asked for six things, and the government gave them to us. Then we had a decision to make, and that decision was, do we trust that the government will actually deliver? Because I think one place we can agree, my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-wherever, is that the Liberals have been very good at making announcements. They've been very bad at delivering on those announcements.

I think back to what happened at AMO about a year ago, where they went to AMO and said there was a \$35- or \$40-million capital fund that was being established to assist municipalities to pay for some much-needed infrastructure investments. The criteria to apply were so strict and so difficult, hardly a municipality got any of the money. So it was a great announcement when the Premier, or whoever it was, walked into AMO that year and said, "I've got \$40 million for municipalities." Everybody applauded. God, I had applauded, because we have much-needed infrastructure in our communities that we can use that money for. But the money never got out.

So we said to ourselves, "We need to have, first of all, some transparency on what this government is doing," because we certainly don't want more eHealths. We certainly don't want any more gas plants or chemotherapy or eHealth scandals. We need to have some form of transparency, and I'll come to that in a minute. We need to also make sure there's accountability, so that this government is actually held to account for those things that they say they're going to do.

We asked for three things. We said we want a financial accountability officer, like Kevin Page and the finan-

cial accountability office that is in Ottawa. The problem we have in Ontario is that we have a very good audit process, as far as the auditor, who is able to look at expenditures once they've been done. That auditor and his office, along with our public accounts committee, have done really good work at looking at expenditures once they've happened, and we've learned from some of that and we've learned how to do better. We only hope they would have learned a little bit better when it comes to the gas plants, but I'll get to that later.

The problem we have is that when the government makes an announcement, there's no mechanism in order to say, "Does that make sense? The numbers that the government is using: Is that right?"—in order to be able to make sure that the government and this Legislature are clearer on what the ramification of the decision is and what the costs are, so that we can in fact do it right, if we're going to do it at all.

We decided to do what they had done federally, when Stephen Harper had decided to hold the Liberals accountable because of the Gomery scandal. We all remember the Gomery scandal, where essentially the federal government gave money to their high-priced consultant friends, who then gave money back to the Liberal Party. They decided to put in place what we call the financial accountability officer here, their Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I just would say this as a note: It's a good thing that Kevin Page was there, because if you look at the F-35 scandal, that was going to cost us how much? Some \$35 billion, I think the numbers were. I may be wrong on the numbers.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Just to start—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just for starters. The government was claiming it was far less, and Kevin Page came in and said, "Hold it a second. Whoa. This thing has got far more legs on it than you think." In fact, it turned out that the cost was far in excess of what the government was claiming. Essentially, he shone the light on the Harper government, and the Harper government had to back down. That parliamentary officer paid his wages and the wages of every Parliamentary Budget Officer to come for the next 100 years, just with that particular expenditure.

We thought that would make sense in Ontario, because, for example, when the government started this whole thing about cancelling the gas plants, the parliamentary budget officer could have said, "Hang on a second," as Andrea Horwath said in the last election. "There's going to be a mighty big price to pay if you start scrapping contracts in the middle of them, because you're going to have to pay penalties to get out."

The government argued shortly after the election that it was only \$40 million, where in fact it's closer to \$500 million to \$900 million, not only according to what we claim but what the auditor has said and what the government's own documents at cabinet had said. The government said \$40 billion when they knew full well it was between \$500 million and \$900 million.

Well, imagine if we would have had a Kevin Page here in Ontario at the time. That parliamentary budget officer, in our case—

Miss Monique Taylor: We would have had money to pay for transit.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, exactly; there's a good point.

We would have been in a situation where they would have been able to shine the light on that, and the government would have known that, when making the decision, and would have said, "Whoa, we can't do this. This is \$500 million to \$900 million." But if they would have made the decision, it would have been in the full light of the numbers, and the public would have known what the costs were, and then the public would have been able to make a better-informed decision in the election about "Do we want a government re-elected that's going to spend \$500 million to \$900 million to save, essentially, a couple of Liberal seats in the Mississaugas?" I would think that maybe the public wouldn't view that as a good idea, which brings me to my first point: Maybe the government wouldn't have done it and would've tried to find some other way to do this to mitigate their losses.

We agree, as New Democrats, that those plants should have never been built in the first place. They certainly shouldn't have been done through the private sector; they should have been built as some sort of public entity. If we would have had a really good process at the beginning that deals with how you deliver public power at cost and so that you're able to site things in a way that makes sense, we would have never had to build it there in the first place. We asked for the financial accountability officer for that very reason.

We also asked for an Ombudsman within the health care sector, something that the government has steadfastly refused to do for the past number of years. We all know the stories. We saw the story in Peterborough where the senior had the camera in the institution, and we saw the bad treatment that that senior got and the pilfering that was going on in his room. That is only one story. We heard the story of the gentleman from London that was raised here in the House by Andrea Horwath a couple of days ago, where he was essentially asked, after he had come in for pneumonia and was very weak and sick and infected, to clean his own toilet at the hospital. He has now gone to the media, I was reading this morning, because the hospital said that wasn't true. He says, "I beg to differ. Darn right it was true." Imagine if the Ombudsman had the ability to take these complaints and to do the investigation.

You know what stops people from doing things that they shouldn't be doing? It's the fear of being caught. That's what the Ombudsman could do in a case like that: ensure that the hospitals and other institutions know that the Ombudsman can investigate. If he can investigate—or she, if it was a woman—as the Ombudsman, then in fact, maybe they wouldn't do those things in the first place.

Then we asked for what is probably something that's going to be one of the better things that we've been able to do in this budget: that the government can't do tolls

and can't do any kind of revenue tools on the big build for transit for the city of Toronto and the GTHA without having a vote in the House. We're saying, as New Democrats, that we believe transit expansion should happen. We believe that Transit City, which the Liberals essentially gutted about four or five years ago—that was the wrong thing to do. Imagine if we had continued with that way back when, we would be further ahead when it comes to transit in this city. But it's a question of how to pay for it. The point New Democrats are making is, you just can't go to the public and say, "It's always you who's going to pay." You need to go to others in our tax system who are making far more money and have them pay their fair share.

You've got the Metrolinx report that came out the other day, and you've got the board of trade of Toronto who say, "Listen, if we don't do this, it's \$6 billion to \$9 billion a year that it's going to cost your economy as a result of gridlock in this city." I agree: That's a bad thing. I agree that we can't have those kind of losses. What I really find appalling is these are the people who represent the top 10%, and they're saying, "We don't want to lose our \$9 billion, but we want you people—the plebes—to pay for it." I just say that's wrong. There's got to be a fairer way of coming at how we're going to pay for this.

Is it really \$2 billion? Because some of this money has already been expended and it's already accounted for for the next number of years. Whatever the final price tag is on an annual basis, how are we going to pay for it? How much of it can come from within? How much of it can come from that top 10% who are making most of the money in this province and paying less back? We need to answer those questions and not just say it's a question of toll lanes on HOVs or taxes that we ask the hard-pressed citizens of this province to pay.

So we asked for those three measures when it comes to accountability. The government gave us, essentially, two and a half of the three. Again, I give them credit; they've given us what we've asked for. I think it shows again that Andrea Horwath knows how to lead, and certainly Madam Wynne knows how to follow. I think that's a really good thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Tim Hudak—I was going to come to the point. Mr. Hudak, he's just left behind.

Anyway, I would just say that we got two and a half, which is pretty darn good because the government has agreed—and that's why we're having this debate today—to the financial accountability officer being established in the province of Ontario. I'll come back to this point in a minute.

The government has agreed that there will be a vote in the House on whatever financial tools we use to pay for the big build and the expansion of transit in this city, something that New Democrats believe has to happen. We firmly believe you need to make these investments. It's a question of how we pay for it.

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On the Ombudsman, they've said no, but two things I would say. The government has said, "We will put in

place other mechanisms that allow an easier way to make a complaint at a hospital and knowing that the complaint is followed up on." It's not as much as we asked for. And the other day I heard the Minister of Health say, "You know what? Maybe the idea of giving the Ombudsman the right to do this is not a bad idea, in light of what was exposed in Peterborough the other day."

Again, Andrea Horwath led, and it would appear that Madam Wynne and Madam Matthews are starting to follow, and I think that's a good thing. As usual, Tim Hudak—well, he's just left behind. We'll just leave him over there.

What we've now got is, essentially, a package that has been put forward by New Democrats, which I'm very proud of. I think that Andrea Horwath and New Democrats said, "Listen. We are in a minority Parliament. We need to be constructive in our approach to this minority Parliament. We're not going to get everything that we want, but our job is to be able to do the best that we can, given where we're at and that we have put together what are reasonable asks that don't cost anywhere near the \$1 billion that the Tories are trying to say."

They're trying to argue that these asks are \$1 billion. I would argue that the financial accountability office will pay dividends way in excess of what this budget is, and when it comes to the costs of the six asks that we have, they're nowhere near a billion dollars. I think it's somewhere—the long-term-care ask is \$35 million. The home care is how much again? The home care is nowhere near—the home care is \$35 million. The job creation program is—I forget.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's not that much. No, that's what the Liberals have done. We'll come back to that.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's all costed. It was about \$100 million in total, but the financial accountability office will offset that. Plus, we have said, "Don't give the HST inputs back to the private sector." There you'll save \$1.3 billion if you didn't—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We didn't leave it out. It was actually one of our asks.

So the point is we have been pretty frugal in our asks. We have looked at the budget. We have said, "What is it that we can do without burdening the taxpayer and making sure that we don't tap out the money that we have?" We've been pretty reasonable and, I think, pretty frugal in our approach to all of this. So I think that was the responsible thing to do, and that's what we've been asked to do by the people of Ontario, which brings me to the programming motion. Now this is all coming together, Speaker.

Mr. Steve Clark: There we go. Icing on the cake.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Icing on the cake it is.

Now we're into the programming motion. The issue that we have, as I said earlier, is that we have these asks that the government has said they would give, and we need to have a mechanism to make sure that they happen.

So we went to the Conservative Party—I know because I’m the House leader for the New Democrats—and I met with my colleague the House leader for the Conservatives, Mr. Wilson, as well as the House leader for the Liberals, Mr. Milloy, and said, “How can we work on this together?”

The Conservatives told us right up front. I said to them, “Listen, I need to pass this budget because we have mechanisms and things in there that are important to the people of Ontario and important to my party, and we need to get the financial accountability office set up. Those are the two things that I want. What do you need included in a programming motion that would make that happen that gives your Conservative caucus and your Conservative base whatever it is that they want?” The response was, “We want an election. That’s all we want.” I said, “Well, you know, we’re not about to vote for that at this point. We’re going to be supporting the budget. So again, what is it that you want in order to come to the table and work something out, as we did last year on a programming motion?” And the Conservatives said, “Listen, we are so mad at the Liberals. We think they’re corrupt and terrible and awful,” and I will agree with you partly. What they did with the gas plants was awful. We’ll deal with that later in this debate. But the Tories said, “The only constructive solution that we have is to have an election, and we are not going to participate in the programming motion.”

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear the applause in the Conservative caucus, and I would ask you to applaud even louder, please. I won’t comment at this point. No, you should do a big applause at this point for yourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins–James Bay is having a lot of conversations with other members. He knows he’s supposed to go through me. No more sidebars. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker. But it was a great way to get a glass of water.

I say that the Conservatives made a decision, and the decision was to serve the interests of the Conservative Party and to ask for an election, not because they believe one way or another that their solution—you know, essentially what they’re doing is they’re saying, “We’re not interested in making this minority Parliament work; we’re only interested in winning an election so we can be the government.” That’s essentially what they’re saying. So I thought it passing strange yesterday that the Conservative House leader was saying, “Oh, nobody is talking to me. The New Democrats and the Liberals aren’t talking to me.” The first person I went to talk to was Jim Wilson, because I’m in opposition—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. That’s no surprise.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The story is becoming interesting.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, it’s no surprise. Everybody knows it. Listen, I’m going to put it on the public record.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You seem to be at it again. And the Minister for Rural Affairs, don’t tease him, okay? Don’t bait him.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We asked the Conservative House leader what he wanted to add to a programming motion that would be important to the Conservative base or his members, and he said in response that the only thing that they wanted was to bring this government down, so I said, “Listen, I’m at this point going to talk to the Liberal House leader, because I want to make sure that those things that we want and secured in this budget are actually done. I want to have the financial accountability office and those other measures such as the vote on the transit initiatives and everything done as part of the agreement that we have with the Liberals.”

So I went and sat down with Mr. Milloy, along with my staff and his staff, and we worked out essentially what’s in this programming motion. What’s important is that there is a fair process by which to debate and to deal with Bill 65, which is the budget bill, going into committee. And we have very strongly worded language within this motion that sets out the terms of reference for what the financial accountability office is going to be, how that’s going to be staffed up, how we’re going to choose the FAO and what the powers of the FAO are when it comes to investigation; and equally as important, a mechanism that ensures that when this House returns this fall, or should it return earlier or should it return later, this is going to be done as one of the first orders of business in this House. And we can take great pride as New Democrats for having done that, because it is historic that we create a financial accountability office in this province.

We can take great pride as New Democrats in having made that happen because we decided, unlike the Conservatives, that we’re not just going to go in here and yell and scream at the Liberals and say, “No, no, no,” and stick our fingers in our ears and stomp our feet and say, “We want an election.” We’re actually going to roll up our sleeves and try to get something done, because in the end, that’s what the people sent us here to do. People said, “We expect you to go there to work together, to at times disagree, but don’t forget that we, the public, want you to do some of our work,” and that’s what we have done. Yes, we will be voting for this particular motion, and we will be doing so proudly because it implements those things that we negotiated.

Now to the amendment that is also before us in regard to this particular motion. The Conservatives yesterday got up and introduced an amendment that essentially repeats what they did in the opposition day motion. I just think, again, it’s telling of where the Tories are at and what their motivation is. They’re saying that they want to be able to have a debate and a vote on a non-confidence motion on the gas plants, and I’m saying, as I said in the last debate, that there is going to be due time for that to happen. We currently have a standing committee of this Legislature that has a very good mandate because we, the

opposition—Mr. Wilson and myself—and then Mr. Milloy, as the government House leader, created the terms of reference for the committee on justice to be able to look into this matter. We meet at the call of the Chair. We call the witnesses of our choosing. We decide what it is that we want to look at, either the cost issue or the contempt issue. And that committee is doing its work. In fact, yesterday they had the Minister of Energy at that committee answering questions, because there is a determination that has to be made about a couple of things on this issue.

There's a very serious issue in the first place: that the government decided not to release documents to the committee once it was asked to. You cannot refuse to give the committee documents. So, and rightfully so, Mr. Leone came to the House last year and introduced a contempt motion that said that was a point of privilege, that the rights of the members as a whole were being trampled on by the government. And we supported that motion because we agree with Mr. Leone that in fact what the government did was wrong. But we're still in the process of finding out exactly who made those decisions and how far that web goes. We know that, in the end, it was the Premier who made the decision, but there was a whole bunch of other people involved, and we need to find out who they are, because this House still has to deal with the very serious issue of contempt.

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For example, if there was a vote on a motion of non-confidence and that was to pass, this whole thing would be swept under an election, and I don't think it would serve the purpose of the people of Ontario, because we would never have dealt with who said no to releasing the documents and who obstructed the right of the committee. Those things would die on the order paper as a result of a writ being issued.

As New Democrats, we think there is a committee that is in place to look at these issues and we should allow the process to evolve so that we can get the answers to those questions.

Like Mr. Leone and the Conservative caucus, New Democrats think what the government has done on the gas plants is awful. They spent almost a billion dollars, money that we can ill afford to spend, on saving a couple of seats in the Mississaugas, and I think that is wrong. That never should have happened.

I look at my friends in the city of Toronto who are looking for an investment for public transit. Imagine what we could have done with a billion dollars for transit in the cities of Mississauga, Toronto and Hamilton if we had not spent the billion dollars on the cancellations of those gas plants.

I think it's responsible for us, as New Democrats, to say no to this amendment that the opposition is bringing forward, because the effect of that would be to kill this investigation and we would never find out who said no to that committee.

I can't predict what the result of the next election is going to be. One of these three parties is going to form the next government. I'm not prepared to accept that a

promise now to revive that investigation will actually happen, should there be a new government formed.

We currently have a Parliament that is seized with a committee to deal with this issue, and it's only responsible on our part, in fact, to allow that committee to do its work so that we can find out who said, "Don't release those documents," who was involved in that decision and, more importantly, so that we can deal with that issue of contempt by way of this House once the committee reports back.

There's also the second issue, and that is how much this cost and who made those decisions. What we've managed to negotiate with the government House leader, both the Conservative House leader and myself, is a mechanism that allows us to get at the numbers of how much this cost and who made those decisions. Those may not be issues of contempt, but they're certainly contemptuous to the public. I think the public has the right to know who made those decisions—because I have to believe that it wasn't just the Premier.

I'll tell you a little secret, Speaker. You probably know already. I have served in the last and I'm serving on this election as co-chair of an election for the New Democrats. These kinds of decisions are not just made by the leader. These kinds of decisions, quite frankly, are made by people within the leader's office. In this case, it was the government, the Premier's office. It's made by those people who were on the committee for the re-election of the Liberal Party, and by the co-chairs, which happens to be the current Premier. I do not believe for one second that Kathleen Wynne did not know the cost of the cancellation and was not part of the decision-making around the cancellation.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that's my argument. I agree with Mr. Leone that they absolutely did know. What this committee has to do is determine to what point they knew, so that when we draft our motion of contempt, we're able to effectively deal with that.

As New Democrats, unlike what Mr. Wilson said yesterday, we don't want to send anybody to jail. That's not what this is about. Yesterday I heard Mr. Wilson say, "I don't necessarily want to send Mr. Bentley to jail, but somebody else has to go to jail." Listen, I don't want to send a political staffer to jail for doing what their overseers told them to do. I think what we want to do in this case is to come back to the House, once we find out what the facts are, and based on the facts we then find some kind of reprimand that goes to the issue so that governments in the future don't do this kind of thing.

So yes, we will be voting against your amendment that essentially calls for a vote of non-confidence based on the gas plants because we have yet to determine the answers to the questions we have put at that committee. I say again—and I say this in all sincerity: If there was an election now, that would die, and we would never get to the bottom of who did what and who made those decisions. So I say to my friends in the Conservative Party that it is a stunt. I understand. I understand that the Con-

servatives have nothing to bring to the budget process, and you need to find something to do so that you are seen as doing something here and able to report that you are up to something in the Legislature.

Well, I would argue that it's probably not very useful, but at least you are getting into the media and you are being reported on as being alive with a pulse here in the Legislature. But I'll say again what I said earlier: In this case—what we've seen over the last two budgets—it's been a case of Andrea Horwath leading, the Liberals following and you guys just essentially on the sidelines. And so, I'd just say to my Conservative friends that I look forward to a time when, in fact, you have something constructive to say about how we deal with all of these things.

With that, I'll conclude my comments to say that I'd ask members of the House to vote no to the motion that was put forward by Mr. Wilson—that, in fact, we do support this particular motion, because it will ensure, importantly, that the financial accountability office of Ontario is made and passed into law early this fall, so that the financial accountability officer can in fact do the work that needs to be done, in order to shine a light on this government so that we have more transparency.

I'm sure that at one point there will be an election in this province. If it's not this fall, it will be next spring, and if it's not next spring, it will be some time after that. The people, at that point, will have the chance to make a decision, and I would argue that when people look at the record of New Democrats in this Parliament, they will say, "Who has been the most responsible? Who has been the most pragmatic? And who has remembered what it is that they're here to do?" That was Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats, and I stand proud as a New Democrat behind my leader, Andrea Horwath, for having had the guts, the wisdom and the practicality to roll up her sleeves and to do what needs to be done in this minority Parliament, always remembering that it's not just about us, the politicians; it's about the people who elected us to come here and do the work of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Okay; further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to get a few remarks on the record this morning with regard to the programming motion. I did listen carefully to the very interesting speech, I think, from the House leader from the third party. The member from Timmins—James Bay added an interesting commentary this morning to the programming motion. Of course, we will not be supporting the amendment that was put forward by the House leader of the official opposition yesterday, and that should not surprise anyone.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you get the opportunity to view some of the newspapers from across the province. Just this morning, I had the opportunity to review an article in the Owen Sound Sun Times, a wonderful little newspaper covering things in southwestern Ontario, particularly in the Owen Sound area. The headline today in the Owen Sound Sun Times, by the writer Jim Algie,

is "Wynne's Rural Approach Promising." I just want to quote from the opening of this particular newspaper column. It has a pertinence, I think, to the overall budget and, indeed, the programming motion, because we're talking about moving the budget forward, so I know you'll give me a little bit of latitude just to quote this morning from the Owen Sound Sun Times.

"Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne is gradually wearing away my initial skepticism about whether she can run the province at the same time as" running the ministry of agriculture and food industry.

"A lifelong urbanite, Wynne has not done a bad job in" agriculture "and food and she seems ... to have survived her first big test running the province. Wynne's strategic instincts and negotiating skills seem to have guided her through the initial hurdles of a crucial budget by wooing third-party support for her Liberal minority government from" the leader of the third party, Ms. Horwath.

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I think that's an interesting commentary. The author of this article talks about the \$100 million that we're putting into rural infrastructure and also talks about the \$30 million that we have proposed in the Local Food Act. This writer, Mr. Algie, is so supportive of what the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food is doing, and I recommend all sides pick up today's copy—Wednesday, May 29, 2013, of the Owen Sound Sun Times.

The author of this article is certainly lauding the Premier for great leadership in terms of reviving the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario, and talks about the great Horse Racing Industry Transition Panel, led by former Ontario Progressive Conservative education minister John Snobelen—Mr. Snobelen of course is well recognized in the horse racing industry across Ontario—and my friend from Peterborough riding, the former Minister of Agriculture from 1990 to 1995, Elmer Buchanan. Mr. Buchanan lives just north of Havelock, Ontario. I get a chance to see Elmer fairly frequently. He and his partner, Lee, raise alpacas. They take the wool from alpacas and use it for a variety of sources. I know the member from Timmins—James Bay was a former very close friend of Elmer Buchanan. The third member of that very distinguished trinity is John Wilkinson, a former Minister of the Environment in the province of Ontario, a former member from Perth—Wellington and a guy we know always had a very keen interest in horse racing. That new trinity, that amazing trinity of Snobelen, Buchanan and Wilkinson, is doing an outstanding job to revive the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario.

I know my friend from Oxford was a very close friend of Minister Snobelen. They were close colleagues when they served together in cabinet. I know how supportive the member from Oxford is of his former cabinet colleague Minister Snobelen in his—well, he's shaking his head here. I'm going to give John a call later this morning. I always thought the member from Oxford and Minister Snobelen were very close friends, that they

would see eye to eye on a lot of issues. But, gosh, I'll get John's phone number.

We would like to express our deepest condolences to Mr. Snobelen. His mother just recently passed away, and I know all of us offer our deepest condolences and sympathy to the Snobelen family. I understand she was quite a lady and really a fine person. We wanted to get that on the record.

I have a few other interesting points I want to make today. When we look at what's been debated in this House, we have Bill 11, the air ambulance act, which was debated for 19 hours and 14 minutes before it was referred to committee. Our good friend Harvey Cooper—you know, Harvey has kind of aged right in front of our eyes, he's been waiting so long for Bill 14, the co-op housing act. We admire his perseverance. We debated that one 15 hours and 50 minutes. And Bill 36, the Local Food Act: 20 hours and 35 minutes.

Just this last Saturday I took my son Braden—Braden is 15, in grade 9 at Holy Cross high school in Peterborough, a great kid, a former page here. He and I went to the Ontario Food Terminal—the first time that Braden had been there—and it was a great Saturday morning to see what goes on at the Ontario Food Terminal, all the activity there. Their message to me was, "Why can't we get this Local Food Act passed?" I said to the folks there, "Well, we have to have some patience, but I know we're going to get this bill through. I know the official opposition has some good ideas for amendments; the third party has some good ideas for amendments." Let's get this bill moving forward, because the folks at the Ontario Food Terminal want to get this passed. I think that's very important.

It's good to see my friend the member from Durham is going back to his seat. Let me say, this past weekend in Peterborough was the 74th edition of the Catholic parents' conference, held in Peterborough. Karan and I had a delightful experience on Saturday night to be sitting with the spouse of the member from Durham, Peggy O'Toole. She's a trustee with the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, and of course the question that we all asked—we were there with Mayor Bennett and his wife—was, where was John? We do know that if the member from Durham had been there for Durham, he would have added an interesting commentary at our dinner discussion on education. We really missed John last Saturday night, but Peg did a great job. It was a delightful dinner. In fact, one of the things that we discussed was—the member from Durham's son Erin is now an MP in Ottawa, so we talked about the family transition that goes on, particularly when you have a young family and you go to Ottawa, and what that means for a family and how they can adjust.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to digress on that for a moment. I will get back to the programming motion here.

We look forward to a vote later this morning. We certainly look forward to getting some things through on this. There are some time-sensitive areas.

I know that the Peterborough poverty reduction committee is particularly interested that we're going to in-

crease the Ontario Child Benefit to \$1,210 on July 1, 2013. That's an interesting program. The late June Callwood, when she provided some commentary on the Ontario Child Benefit, said it was the most progressive initiative in Ontario in the last four decades. I think that says it all, because we do know the late June Callwood and her reputation in bringing about fairness for people who have challenges in the province of Ontario.

Also, the member from Beaches–East York has been a real leader in this area of providing choice of payment—monthly or annual—for the Ontario Trillium Benefit program. That's something I know seniors in Peterborough are very concerned about, so I'd like to give some credit to the member from Beaches–East York.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we can all take that 15% reduction in auto insurance. I know everybody will welcome that: a few more dollars in the pockets of the hard-working men and women across the province of Ontario.

I know what is particularly important to AMO and the municipalities is the dedicated two cents of gas tax each year for public transportation.

The other thing that I'm so supportive of: I do like the financial accountability officer. I just want to follow up on what the member from Timmins–James Bay said during his remarks.

We have a very strong system in Ontario. We have the public accounts committee, and we do have the Auditor General, but that's always at the tail end of government programs. The financial accountability officer, of course, will be at the front end, and we welcome the legislation that will be introduced this fall. I think it will provide, overall, an increased amount of accountability for taxpayers' dollars in the province of Ontario. We certainly welcome that. I think it's a good initiative. On this side, we'll certainly be supporting that particular initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to all these amazing initiatives that we have in the budget. Look, this is a budget for all Ontarians. It's not a budget from the official opposition. It's not a budget from the third party. It's not a budget from the government. This budget has been the collective consensus of all Ontarians. You've been reaching out, Mr. Speaker, we've been reaching out, and the third party has been reaching out. We've all been reaching out to come out with good ideas.

One of the good ideas I really like in the budget, and we got it from the federal finance minister, the very Honourable Jim Flaherty, is that capital acceleration allowance. When I talk to GE in Peterborough, when I talk to Siemens, and when I talk to Quaker Oats, they see this as a very important aspect for reinvestment into their capital and their machinery. We want to make sure that we get that in place. It will go to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—an opportunity to look further into the budget component parts.

We welcome in Peterborough the investment in youth employment. We do know, when we look at the statistics of youth employment, that we certainly need some investment in that area, and we're prepared to do that. We want to make sure that the next generation can get access

to those jobs and make a contribution to the overall being in the province of Ontario.

The other thing that is very important is our investment in home care. I know, Mr. Speaker, you're getting calls in your constituency in Hamilton. I know how Ontarians, particularly our seniors, will like the investment into home care. I know the minister for seniors—he's not with us this morning—has been a very strong advocate of that particular initiative.

We're all concerned about deficit reduction to \$9.8 billion, the fourth year in a row that—I think we're the only government in Canada that consistently hits our fiscal targets. I believe we're on track to certainly meeting our target for the next fiscal year, and we look forward to that.

We're controlling our spending while not raising revenues, we've brought in tax reforms that work, and of course we're looking at ways to keep the economy going forward, particularly in a great riding like Chatham-Kent-Essex.

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I think the member there should get that changed to Chatham-Kent-Leamington to actually reflect that area. I've spent some time in Leamington, a wonderful community. H.J. Heinz, of course, is a major player in that community in the food processing industry. Food processing: \$34 billion across Ontario.

I learned something interesting when I visited the Food Terminal last Saturday: The ketchup that they make in Leamington is unique for the Canadian market because Canadian consumers like ketchup that's sweeter, and it's only produced in Leamington, Ontario. If you get the chance to go to the Ontario Food Terminal you'll learn something new each and every day.

We look forward to getting the budget motion passed. There will be a vote a little later this morning—

Mr. John Yakubski: You need a sweet ketchup to be able to swallow what you guys are peddling.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I hear from my good friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, a great guy—I know that even in Barry's Bay they like Heinz ketchup that's sweeter than the American variety, and I think that's a good thing.

So we will continue. The budget bill has already had 11 hours of debate, and the programming motion is going to provide a very responsible framework over the next number of days to get this through, and then the budget bill will be passed. We look forward to continuing to consult with ordinary Ontarians, those hard-working men and women who do such a great job every day.

I know the good folks in Alexandria are happy about this budget and the investment in home care and youth unemployment—but particularly when you remember that through the downloading exercise of 1998-99, 43% of all the roads and bridges were downloaded in eastern Ontario. I know my friend, the member there who came from municipal politics—every day they're trying to look at that inventory. They look at that big albatross that was put around their neck in eastern Ontario, and they're looking for ways to get rid of that inventory.

So part of our investment, that \$100 million for roads and bridges—I know the folks in Alexandria are excited. I'm sorry, Speaker, I get a little excited—

Mr. Grant Crack: Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —when it comes to Glengarry Prescott; there we go.

I know I get a little excited when I talk about roads and bridges, which are the backbone of many rural communities, particularly in eastern Ontario where they had to bear that burden of 43% of all those roads and bridges that were downloaded in eastern Ontario. Under the leadership of my friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, we're making progress to get rid of that inventory.

Also a good thing in eastern Ontario is the broadband connection, which is the highway of the 21st century. We look forward, like communities like Barry's Bay and those kinds of communities, to taking advantage of that highway of the 21st century that will allow for business development and allow for e-education to take place, which I think is extremely important in eastern Ontario.

I know my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is very excited about that broadband connectivity, that highway for the 21st century, because I know he would like to be seen, like Sir John A. Macdonald who is the father of the transcontinental railroad, and to be part of that railroad of the 21st century. I know he's extremely excited about that, and we look forward to getting out and about in Barry's Bay to celebrate these kinds of great initiatives.

I'm also looking to get back to Athens one of these days. I particularly like Athens in the great riding of Leeds-Grenville. I had the opportunity to be there on a couple of occasions and I know the hospitality of the former member of Leeds-Grenville, now a senator. In fact, Senator Runciman paid me a phone call last week, and I was really excited about that. My staff phoned and said someone was holding from the Senate of Canada. I said, "Who would be calling me from the Senate of Canada? I hope it's not Mike Duffy." It wasn't Mike Duffy. I picked up the phone and it was Bob Runciman.

Let me say it's always a delight to speak to Mr. Runciman, one of the most distinguished members ever to serve in this body. Senator Runciman and I had a great conversation about horse racing; he, of course, is very interested in horse racing and he certainly—well, I won't get into all the details of the conversation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Peterborough.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Since it is now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming the deputy mayor from the city of Oshawa, Mr. Roger Bouma.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today's page captain is Jack Mogus, and sitting in the members' gallery today are Jack's mother, Janet, his sisters Julia and Emma, and his grandmother Maria Matias. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome Tim Patriquin and Jason Donville to question period today. We hope you enjoy your visit as guests of John O'Toole and myself. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I wonder if you could help me welcome three interns who are working in our office at the Ministry of the Attorney General this summer. They're all budding law students: Brooke Auld, Colin Campbell and Kevin Leung, who are here in the members' gallery. Yes, we have three of them—great people.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Matthew Lawford. He's from Toronto, the grandson of Gillian Lawford, who's a great resident from Markdale in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome Amy Padro, manager of government relations, from Parachute Canada. She and her organization are here today to celebrate Safe Kids Week.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Graham Clow, an old Queen's University friend of mine. Stand up, Graham. Graham is a special person because his son Brian works for the Liberal Party back here and steers the Liberal ship.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Laura Lee Walter, the mother of Jakob Walter, who's a page for that great riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. Welcome.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce my cousin Steve Donaldson, his lovely wife, Rhonda, their daughter Lara and their son Adam to Queen's Park.

As well, I have two constituents from the riding of Northumberland–Quinte West: Lori Caughey and Cara Owens. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Mr. Marek Goldyn, CEO of the European Club of Toronto, and Mr. Bob Ristić from the Serbian Television Toronto. They're here for the European flag-raising, which will take place on the front lawn of Queen's Park right after question period. Welcome.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's my pleasure to introduce my guests today: Richard Foreman, Lorraine Wilson-Munro, Kenneth Foreman and Pat Foreman, who are here to observe question period and to have a tour of Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce and welcome some friends in the members' west gallery, from CUPE Local 82 in Windsor: President Jim Wood, Vice-President Chad Goebel, Treasurer John Grima, Secretary Mike Preston and Membership Officer Jeff St. Pierre, who are here with CUPE Ontario celebrating 50 years of representation for public employees in Ontario.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce some very outstanding young individuals who are interns in the Ministry of Finance. In the members' gallery: Neville Britto, Sahar Ziaey, Erich Schmidt and Blair Ostrom. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend of my wife and I as well as the soulmate of my colleague Mr. MacLaren: his precious wife, Janet, is here with us today.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pride and honour to introduce my father and his wife, Mike Taylor and Pauline Taylor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I could give you a cheap shot, but I'm not going to.

Hon. John Milloy: It gives me pleasure to introduce Graham Clow from Toronto, who is with us this morning. His son Brian works here at Queen's Park. We're very pleased to welcome him.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have a number of guests here from the city of Ottawa today. They are not yet in the members' gallery, but they will be arriving: Guy Boone, Hubert Mamba, Dr. Ray Barton and Jeannette Chau. They're all from the city of Ottawa, and they're all professional engineers.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce, in the visitors' gallery, Dr. Azhar Masood. Dr. Masood's daughter, Hooriya Masood, is our page, and they just live a few blocks away.

Quite extraordinarily, Dr. Masood is a research fellow, a PhD, in lung biology and works at SickKids Hospital. We're having a little battle. I'm hoping his daughter is a future MPP for Toronto Centre, and he's determined, I think, to convince her to become a physician. Welcome.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce Gillian Lawford, who I understand is a keen hockey fan and will be picking for the Detroit Red Wings tonight in a key game.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have a large delegation of people coming from Kingston that are just going through security right now. This is Dan Anderson, Angie Bacon, Imaan Bayoumi, Marilynn Birmingham, Barb Deroche, Bonnie Ferguson, Mary Forbes, Mathew Gventer, Jean Gower, Janet Heyman, Dianna Inkster, Kyle Jones, Pauline Kulhman, Graham Lodge, Richard McNeil, Norah Parish, Tom Pinero, John Platt, Harold Pickering, Aimee Van Vlack, Ross Sutherland, Natalie Mehra, from the Ontario Health Coalition; Monica Loneragan, Elanor Beach, Donna Ferguson, Amina Buchanan, Linda Forster, Chris Kingston, Sheri Robinson, Robert Kylie, Phil Trotter and Sandra Willard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation led by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Hellenic Republic, His Excellency Evangelios Meimarakis. He is accompanied today by the ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to Canada, His Excellency Eleftherios Anghelopoulos. Welcome to our assembly House here today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, we will be having question period. It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we would like to stand down our lead questions at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just on a point of order: We will be doing the same until the Premier arrives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Next rotation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not that confusing.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, we offered to participate in an all-party select committee to assist the government in finding \$2 billion of savings across all ministries. We did that because we outright reject the concept that there should be \$2 billion of additional taxation on families and businesses in this province. The New Democrats reject that as well, and we know today that the vast majority of Ontarians reject that.

I'd like to know from the Minister of Finance: Will he agree to accept our offer to form an all-party select committee to assist him in finding the savings and efficiencies of \$2 billion across the ministries?

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We want to start a conversation.

Hon. Charles Sousa: You know what? Let us start a conversation. Let us agree—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start a conversation. The interjections will stop.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let us agree to do this: Let us agree to pass the budget that talks about a very disciplined and determined measure to curb our spending. We're taking the steps necessary to ensure that spending remains below 1% year over year. As a result of those initiatives, we've been able to achieve over \$5 billion in cuts over the last year to reduce our deficit projections. Next year's projection is going down by another \$1 billion again because of those measures that we've taken. That is what is important.

We need to ensure that, going forward, we work collaboratively by passing this budget, ensuring that these proper steps are taken so that we tackle and eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The New Democrats have already confirmed that they'll pass the budget. We're going to vote against it because we do not believe that to increase spending by \$2 billion is a good start towards reducing spending and waste.

Here's what I'm asking the Minister of Finance: Apart from the budget, which is a separate issue, we all know that there are at least billions of dollars of waste in this government every year. We, as the official opposition, want to extend our offer of support to form an all-party select committee to help find that waste so that we don't have to put \$2 billion of additional taxes onto the backs of families and businesses across this province. Will he accept that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have taken extraordinary steps to transform the way government works, to find those savings to ensure that we're delivering services in health care and education and all the other ministries that have taken extraordinary steps to reduce their spending. But we know that in health care and education there are still pressures that are necessary because of the increasing demands.

What is necessary as well is to be balanced in our approach. What is necessary is to stimulate economic growth and economic renewal by stimulating jobs and investments in our capital infrastructures. What is not necessary and what is harmful for economic renewal is a slash-and-burn policy, across-the-board cuts, attacks on our nurses on our front lines. This is what they're offering. We're not going to stand for that.

We're going to invest in our future; we're going to invest in our young people. We're going to create jobs and stimulate growth. That's what this budget is about.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. New Democrats FOIed everything from the Premier's office which included the words "Project Vapour." We were told nothing existed. In the process, we received a sworn affidavit. It said that the Premier's chief of staff, Chris Morley, had his email account deleted on June 21, 2012; Jamison Steeve, the principal secretary, had his email account deleted on August 17, 2012; and Sean Mullin, the Premier's energy adviser, had his email account deleted on August 17, 2012. Then we learned in committee that the energy minister's chief of staff was deleting all his emails.

Yesterday, Ontario's information commissioner said, "It strained credulity that no one thought maybe they should retain some of the emails...."

Can the minister explain why senior Liberal political staff involved in the gas plants were deleting all their emails?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to point out to the House that the honourable member, in his question, forgot to point out that there were around 30,000 documents—many of them from the Premier's office—that were recently delivered to the committee.

In terms of the specific issues he raises, he is correct. My understanding is that the Information and Privacy

Commissioner is looking into the matter, and we await her report.

At the same time, I can say, as the Minister of Government Services, that we take our obligation to retain relevant records very seriously. Training opportunities have been available for political staff as we enter into this new government phase, and we're certainly making efforts to make sure that the rules and regulations are being followed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, New Democrats have asked the information commissioner to investigate. Your comment there is correct.

In documents filed with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the government tried to stop the commissioner from looking at this. The government wrote, "the ... allegations about the destruction of records ... are not matters that may be appealed to the commissioner." That response came March 5, 2013, long after this current Premier was sworn in.

Why did the government, under this current Premier—not the previous one—continue to try and hide the destruction of documents and stop the information commissioner from getting information?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have turned over 130,000 documents to the justice committee, including, as I just referenced, 30,000 from the Premier's office.

In terms of the specific cases that the member raises, the committee itself has a mandate to look at the issue of documents and can pursue this matter. The Information and Privacy Commissioner is looking into it, and we await her report.

As I said, we take this matter very, very seriously, the retention of documents at the political staff level. Training courses are under way, and I know ministers' offices have regimes in place to make sure that the rules are followed.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans, I often meet with families and listen to their concerns, like all members here.

One concern that I frequently hear from parents is that they want to know that the right services and supports are in place for their child's development. This is a universal concern, and as a grandparent myself, I know that these types of services make positive impacts on the lives of our children. I know that in Ontario we are providing some of the best supports available anywhere in the world.

My question: Can the minister please tell me what we are doing as a government to help children grow up to be healthy teenagers and then healthy adults?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for his question. As he indicated, as a parent myself, nothing is more important to me than making sure all children are well prepared for life.

Our ministry is investing \$261 million annually in a myriad of programs for healthy child development. These supports include our early years centres, preschool speech and language programs and Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children supports vulnerable mothers from the prenatal period through their child's transition to school.

Through programs like this, we're able to directly assist in the healthy development of all young people. We remain committed to providing children with the best possible start in life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. It is very clear to me that this government takes the responsibility of healthy childhood development seriously and is making a significant investment.

However, this is an area where there is always an opportunity to make improvements. As a government, we need to be constantly looking to improve the services we provide while also seeking out new and improved methods. I understand that in March of this year, a Healthy Kids Panel released a report with recommendations to improve healthy childhood development, specifically with the goal of reducing childhood obesity. I'm pleased our government established this panel to help combat such an important issue.

Can the minister please tell the House more about the report and how our government is responding?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Healthy Kids Panel for their report, which aims to improve the health and well-being of children in our province. The report made recommendations on a number of vital Ministry of Children and Youth Services programs. These include the Poverty Reduction Strategy, student nutrition, and mental health and addictions.

We are committed to reviewing the recommendations in order to inform our future direction. Minister Matthews and I will be co-chairing a working group on the Healthy Kids Panel report. This working group will be essential in the effort to move towards this government's goal to improve early childhood development services. We will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders in our commitment to improve the health and well-being of every child in Ontario.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, you have grossly mismanaged our jail systems in Ontario. You've closed jails in Walkerton, Owen Sound and Bluewater without enough capacity to safely absorb the inmates. Rather than fixing problem jails, you close them.

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Given your track record, people in my area think you have no interest in actually fixing the problems at EMDC. Many think you'll ignore the problems until you can officially close the jail. Minister, when do you intend to close the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me thank all the correctional officers and the staff at the EMDC. They are doing an extremely good job. It's not an easy job to do, and I wanted to thank them for all the good work that they're doing.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as I said yesterday, the Elgin—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —our staff in our correctional facilities, in EMDC, is my utmost priority. I know that they are always working in a very challenging environment.

Actually, one of my first visits when I was appointed Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services was at EMDC. I met the leadership there, I met representatives from the correctional officers and I saw first-hand the good work they are doing over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, as you know, the situation in the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre came to a head last night. Correctional officers, insulted by your comments, locked down the jail. Two fires broke out; a green alert occurred, of which there have only been two in the past 22 years, and it was issued; and a number of inmates were reportedly sent to the hospital.

The correctional officers at EMDC work day in and day out in dangerous conditions—conditions made worse by your mismanagement. Yet yesterday you refused to take responsibility and instead threw our front-line corrections officers under the bus and insulted all the managers around the province.

There's absolutely no excuse for your failure on this file. Minister, will you admit you have no credibility on this file, publicly apologize and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is not the moment to add your interjections.

Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the health and safety of the correctional officers and the staff at EMDC is my utmost priority. And if I offended someone yesterday, I deeply apologize, because that was not my intent.

Since I was appointed with the responsibility of correctional services, I've worked very closely with my ministry, with our partners out there, with the union. Actually, I'm meeting the union this afternoon and the executive of EMDC, because I want to hear first-hand what their concern is and I want us to work together to improve the situation at EMDC. I want to see a real difference in EMDC.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. To put us back on rotation what I'll do is, I'll go to the NDP for the two-question part and then come back to the

leader for the primary questions, and then I'll come back to the leader of the third party for the primary questions.

The member from London—Fanshawe.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

ÉTABLISSEMENTS CORRECTIONNELS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday there was yet another emergency at EMDC: A second fire in less than a month broke out and three inmates have been injured. Instead of working to address the persistent problems at this jail, the minister chose to blame the workers.

For years, workers have brought up time and time again the problems at this facility. My leader, myself and other members in this House have brought this to her attention. Minister, you have chosen to blame the workers who have done everything in their power to keep the jail functioning. Will the minister apologize to the workers for her thoughtless comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe. I know she has a keen interest in improving the situation there, and I have asked her to give me some names of people who will be good candidates to sit on the new board that I want to appoint to improve the situation there.

As I said, I'm meeting with the executive of the jail this afternoon, and I want to continue this relationship to improve the situation out there.

Again, if I have upset, if I have insulted, it was not my intent, and I deeply apologize.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, workers at EMDC have been raising issues about the safety of this jail for years. But little has changed, and the jail continues to be severely overcrowded and is a highly dangerous environment for workers and inmates alike. The minister's lack of action places the staff and inmates of EMDC in conditions she herself would not want to work in.

I ask again, Mr. Speaker, will the minister apologize to the workers of EMDC and finally take action today to improve the conditions? I'm not asking for an apology; I'm asking for the words "I am sorry."

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm going to say it in French, too, because I've said it twice before. Alors, si j'ai offensé quelqu'un, je m'en excuse. Ce n'était pas mon intention parce que je sais combien difficile est leur travail, et ils travaillent très, très fort.

But I wanted to say that we are working on advancing our plan, so we are hiring 11 new full-time correctional officers. We implemented 24-hour nursing in March, and we added, in January, a mental health nurse. We've hired three more operational managers, and we're building new control models. Also, the correctional officers now can wear safety vests; they have this opportunity now. Their safety is my utmost priority.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Later this morning, the Legislature will be voting on a budget motion asking us to endorse the direction of your government on fiscal issues which includes \$20 billion more in debt. The deficit goes up, not down, and it includes \$1 billion to buy the support of the NDP.

Premier, before the Legislature votes, I think it's important to ask you directly if you are confident that the credit rating agencies will not downgrade Ontario's credit rating as a result. Can you say with full confidence, Premier, we will not suffer yet another Liberal credit downgrade?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I apologize for being late; I had a modest proposal for building transit in the GTHA today, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I really believe that the budget that we have put forward is one that will spur the kind of job creation that we need in the province. It focuses on creating the conditions for job creation, and it also deals with the issues, addresses some of the issues, that affect people's day-to-day lives. I think that the Leader of the Opposition would be interested in that.

In terms of the bond rating agency, DBRS has confirmed the rating. They acknowledged a solid budgetary performance achieved for the year ended March 31, 2013. "Ontario handily exceeded expectations in 2012-13," and all trends remain stable. That is the news that we got yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I'm very confident that the budget that we've put forward is fiscally responsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier did not express confidence that there won't be a further credit downgrade, which I think is of great concern. The credit rating is a measure, Premier, of the province's trustworthiness that we'll meet our obligations. Once the province loses that trust—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—spiral that we saw in Europe, where their debt obligations grew. They had less money to put into essential services like hospitals, highways and classrooms.

Yesterday, the former Liberal finance minister Dwight Duncan expressed concern of a further credit downgrade. He said the credit rating agencies will have "stern words" for you. I'll set aside the irony for a moment of Dwight Duncan talking about fiscal responsibility.

But I'll ask you, Premier—You've already had three credit downgrades under the previous finance minister—can you assure the House 100% that we won't have a fourth as a result of this big budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just say that under the current finance minister, here's what DBRS is saying:

"While several provinces have delayed their fiscal recovery plans in response to weaker growth, Ontario continues to target a return to balance (on its basis) by 2017-18."

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They go on to say, "Given the recent trend of outperforming budget targets and reduced borrowing needs, the debt trajectory is encouraging...."

We know we have challenges ahead of us. We know that there are hills yet to climb, but we are on a responsible path. We've had one confirmation of that. I am confident that we are going to be able to return to fiscal balance. We're going to be able to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. That is what the markets are looking—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I say back to the Premier, when Dwight Duncan is lecturing you on fiscal responsibility, you know you've got a big problem. We've already seen you reference DBRS. As you know, Premier, DBRS did downgrade the province's credit rating, similarly to Moody's and Standard and Poor's.

Ontario families will have to actually pay the higher taxes the Premier has proposed recently—increasing the HST and increasing the gas tax. Average Ontarians need to look out for their own credit ratings. They make extraordinary efforts to protect that because it helps them to get a mortgage, to pay for a car, to make sure they can finance their kids' education. So too should the province of Ontario treat that credit rating as sacrosanct, to make sure you do everything to make sure we spend within our means, because we owe that obligation to hard-working Ontarians who are seeing more money wasted under this government.

I'll ask the Premier one last time, can she assure the Legislature that her budget that's going to drive up the debt, not down, drive up the deficit, not down—can you assure us we won't be hit with a fourth consecutive credit downgrade?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that there will be other news today from another agency, but there was no downgrade yesterday. We are on stable ground, according to DBRS yesterday, so that is good news for Ontario. I would expect that the Leader of the Opposition of this great province would be celebrating that, would be saying that is a very good thing, that Ontario is on a solid track.

I will remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are on track to balance by 2017-18, that we are the government that has put in place a long-term plan to reduce the debt-to-GDP and that Ontario is recognized as a safe and secure place to invest. That is why we are attracting investment to the province.

I have confidence in Ontario. I really wish that the Leader of the Opposition had that same confidence.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. You have indicated that increasing home care services and achieving better value for health care dollars spent are top priorities. Community care access centres were established to award contracts to community nursing organizations and to assure value for money. However, recent actions taken by CCACs, with your government's approval, have actually moved Ontario in the opposite direction: higher costs for less service. CEO salaries have been allowed to skyrocket and the conflict of interest set up by the direct provision of home care services by CCACs has increased costs to the point that only 60% of health care dollars are actually spent on front-line services. CCAC staff have increased by 10%, but the provision of services to individuals has only increased by 5%. Premier, how can you possibly claim that you've increased home care services and value for money when the evidence clearly shows the opposite?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to some of the specifics.

I was in London last week, and Minister Matthews and I had the opportunity to visit a family who are at home, getting the care that they need, because the CCAC has been able to coordinate that care. One of the things that is happening is that coordination of all of the partners who deliver service on the front lines and the CCAC providing that kind of coordination. I honestly don't know exactly the specifics that the member opposite is speaking to, but what I do know is that there are more people getting more care in the province than there has been over the past decade. What I do know is that we have committed \$185 million more to provide for more home care and, in addition to that, more community care, which is exactly what families need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You know what's really sad about this? There's been an increase in funding, but there isn't an increase in service. I'm sure that we all hear from people in our constituencies about thousands of people still on home care wait-lists.

But let's talk about where the money's actually going. The salary for the Central CCAC CEO went from \$180,000 in 2009 to \$272,000 in 2012. The salary for the Erie St. Clair CEO went from \$169,000 to \$221,000, and the Hamilton Niagara CEO's salary increased from \$213,000 to \$266,000. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on.

Premier, again, how can you possibly claim that you're increasing home care services when we have this kind of scandalous spending going on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the reality is that the kind of care that people are getting—and you know, we were in the Pattersons' home last week. It's about the care that people are getting actually in their home, but it's also about the community care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For example, the day programs that allow people who need that kind of support at home to go during the day to a program that is supported by the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and allows the caregiver at home to have that respite. There's a complex web of supports that need to be in place, Mr. Speaker. What we know is that the CCAC provides the coordination of that kind of care, and they provide it from the time a person is in hospital until they get that support and they start to heal at home.

I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the health care system is undergoing a transformation that is providing more care for people in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: What it should be about is getting more money to front-line service, and that's not what we're seeing happening. Certainly another complicating factor is the direct provision of home care services by the CCACs. It's a clear conflict of interest because the CCAC is the oversight body that awards the contracts to nursing providers, but now it's competing with the very organizations it's supposed to fund.

The RNAO, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, pointed this out in their recent report. They stated, "Programs suggest that the CCACs are taking on a more direct care role, which was not their intended purpose. The CCAC system does not possess the structure, mandate or capacity to deliver direct care to Ontarians. Moreover, this inappropriate function of the CCAC is destabilizing the community care workforce."

Instead of delivering more front-line services, evidence clearly shows they're simply building a larger bureaucracy. Community care organizations dare not speak up against this because CCACs are the ones that award this work—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, what will you do to end this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can tell you one thing: I will not be taking lessons on how to deliver high-quality health care from the party opposite. Their record speaks for itself. When they were in charge, Speaker, we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll do. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, when they were in power, they cut home care services to seniors, a 22% cut in nursing and 30% in homemaking services between 2001 and 2003, and their current white paper calls for the firing of 10,000 nurses. These people don't know what they're talking about.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Coming from both sides, it's very difficult to try to get that individual, but I have them in my head, and if I hear it again, I'll go right at them.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, if the Conservatives genuinely cared about improving home care in this province, they would be supporting the budget that significantly expands home care services to the people who need it the most in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

To bring clarity, I will go to the leader of the third party for the primary questions. After that, the rest of the rotation comes back to the government side.

The leader of the third party.

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AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's for the Premier. Ontarians have told us that they need some relief. Their bills are going up but their paycheques aren't keeping up. That's why we called for a 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums. But people are worried that insurance companies are raising rates before any reductions. What does the Premier have to say to drivers who are concerned that they won't get the relief that they need and deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I would say to drivers is that we agree with the leader of the third party that we need to do something about auto insurance premiums, which is why we were interested in acting on that. The NDP had a specific suggestion. We have committed to doing that and it is part of our budget proposal. So we want to get the budget passed. We want to work on getting the fraud out of the system, finding those savings and those savings being passed on to premium holders. We've made a commitment to do that in the budget. We look forward to getting the budget through the legislative process so that we can begin to implement it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier did listen to New Democrats and she promised Ontarians that she'll drop auto insurance premiums by 15%. But we've been hearing from drivers who have received notices recently of double-digit increases in their premiums. Ontarians want to know that the government will square that circle. What concrete steps will the Premier take to ensure that premiums go down like she promised?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That plan is laid out in the budget. We have committed to an average reduction of 15% across the province. You know, it is an average and

we have to be clear that that doesn't mean that everyone will get an absolute 15% reduction. That was never the commitment by either party. It's in our budget. We want to get the budget passed. This one situation that the leader of the third party has raised I cannot comment on, but I know that the Minister of Finance has spoken with the industry. It is not our intention that there would be undue increases as we work up to the passage of the budget, but we do need to get the budget passed in order to be able to implement it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday the finance minister said, "We've been very direct in telling" the insurance companies "to maintain the rates at what they are." But New Democrats are hearing from drivers—not just the woman that was here yesterday, but dozens of drivers—who are getting big increases—big increases—in their premiums. Will the Premier take action today to ensure that rates are maintained as they are while we put the tools in place to start bringing them down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way averages work is that some go up and some go down and some stay the same. The reality is that we could come up with lists of people who have had reductions in auto insurance, we could come up with lists of people who have had some increases in auto insurance and some for whom their premiums have stayed the same. What we have said is that overall we believe there should be a reduction of premiums. We have said we have committed to a 15% average reduction across the board. In order to be able to begin to implement our plan, we need to get the budget passed. I look forward to the support of the third party so we can do that and we can begin to implement those changes.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. Real investment in transit and transportation infrastructure is going to take long-term planning. In fact, Metrolinx estimates it will take 25 years of investment. The government has done its own long-term planning and has made it clear that they plan to cancel the fairness tax on high-income earners as soon as Ontario's books are balanced. If the government's worried about funding, can the Premier explain why she's planning a tax cut for people making over \$500,000 a year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, at the root of this question is an intention to undermine the notion that we have to build transit in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area. There should be no debate about that. It should be very clear to anyone who is in touch with constituents who live in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area that we must do something about investment in transit for the next generation. It would be irresponsible of us as a collective to ignore this issue, because if we believe that the economy of the province is driven to some extent by this region, then we know that moving goods and people

around this region has to improve. So I reject the notion that we not move ahead on building transit. In terms of the tax regime, I will speak to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier wants to do is undermine families who are having a hard time making ends meet these days in Ontario, while they give huge breaks to the people at the very top of the income scale in Ontario. New Democrats don't think that that's fair.

In addition to opening new tax loopholes that are going to allow corporations to get the HST off of their expenses like gasoline, the government said their first priority, as soon as the books are balanced, is more corporate tax giveaways.

If the Premier believes that Ontario needs long-term investment for infrastructure, could she explain why she has made corporate tax giveaways worth billions of dollars a priority?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I believe and what my team believes is that we must have a thriving economy. What that means is businesses must be competitive with our neighbouring jurisdictions. We must be able to attract investment to Ontario. This has to be a place where investment wants to come so that businesses can grow, and what businesses need, in addition to that kind of competitive tax regime, is the infrastructure in place so that they can move their goods across the GTHA, so that they can bring people to this region to live and work in those industries because people want to be here. They want to raise their families here because it doesn't take them two hours to get their kids to school or to daycare or to get themselves to work.

We're going to work on both fronts because it's a complex issue. We're going to work to make sure that the conditions are in place for business to come here and we're going to invest in transit so that we can grow the economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I believe and what New Democrats believe is that we need a fair economy in the province of Ontario.

Just a few short months ago, one transit expert said this: "We need to ask less of those who can afford less, and more from those who are getting the greatest benefit from transportation investment—the private sector."

Quoting again: "Lots of people are calling for an 'adult conversation' about road pricing ... and even regional sales taxes...."

"[I do] not think Ontario families should pay more right now in the GTHA."

That expert, the Premier should know, is sitting kind of right behind her as the cabinet minister now for the Ministry of Transportation.

Can the Premier please explain to him, then, and to all of us why the government is open to new taxes for Ontario families at the same time they're planning to cut taxes for Ontario's wealthiest individuals and largest corporations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party thinks it is fair for a single parent to have to get their kids up at 5:30 in the morning in order to get them to daycare so that they can get to their job, because they live in the 905 and they're coming into the 416 to work, I disagree. I disagree categorically that it is fair for us as a government to neglect our responsibility that has been neglected for at least a generation. We started building transit when we came into office in 2003, but before that there had been at least a decade of neglect on this file. So if the leader of the third party thinks that that neglect should continue, we're just going to have to agree to disagree, because I think those investments are necessary for the families of this constituency.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. With the warm weather finally—very slowly—coming, it's really nice to see baseball diamonds and soccer fields in my riding brimming with children. In fact, it's really nice to just see children outside playing, whether they're just playing tag or they're on their bicycles, and that's because parents realize today that it's important that our children lead an active life.

One thing that parents are concerned about is injury while our children are playing, especially serious injuries like concussions. Can the minister tell my constituents in the riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville what this government's plan is for injury prevention?

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Hon. Michael Chan: I'm happy to answer the question from the honourable member from Mississauga East—Cooksville.

This week marks Safe Kids Week. As I mentioned earlier today, we're welcoming Parachute Canada to Queen's Park, and this year they are recognizing the importance of sport safety and concussion prevention.

Our government recognizes the importance of Ontarians being active in sport and recreation. Since 2003, we have invested over \$750 billion to support sport and recreation programs and we are eagerly committed to injury prevention. This is why we are working with the Coaches Association of Ontario to develop and expand concussion management education opportunities for Ontario coaches.

Speaker, we are also working with provincial and multi-sport organizations to ensure concussion protocols are developed for young athletes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer. It's really good to see that the safety of our children continues to be a priority for this government.

Sometimes it can be a little bit challenging for families to make sure they're physically active. It costs money

and you need places to be able to be active. I'd like to know what this government is doing to help ensure that Ontarians have access to extracurricular and sports activities.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question, again. I'm pleased to say that the successful expansion of after-school programs has enabled children to not only participate in a safe environment but also increase overall physical activity. The program now provides over 20,000 opportunities in more than 389 locations across Ontario. We want our province to be a healthy, prosperous place to live, work and play.

We provided over \$23 million to our sport partners in 2012-13 to promote participation and excellence in sport across our beautiful province. Through our investments, we are contributing to an Ontario that is both safer for kids and encourages them to get more involved and active overall.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the privacy commissioner expressed a very dim view of the actions of former senior staff in the Premier's office. The email accounts of three of the Premier's former staffers, including the chief of staff, no longer exist and can't be recovered—this, despite a legal requirement to keep all those records for five years.

Now, this doesn't happen by accident. It takes a deliberate act to make that happen. The commissioner said it "strained credulity" that they wouldn't know they were to retain their emails.

Premier, those emails are critical to the justice committee's investigation into your gas plant scandal. Would you please tell us what was in those emails so that we can get to the bottom of this scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said to the honourable member from the New Democratic Party: I believe, at present, we have provided the committee 131,222—that's an approximate number—documents that have gone forth, with close to 30,000 from the Premier's office.

The member is raising an investigation that's going on by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is an officer of this House. We look forward to receiving her report.

In terms of the regime that we have in place for political staff, particularly the new ones who have come forward in this new government, we have had a training session across the board. We've also had individual training sessions so that they understand their responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, that's even more proof that even a high horse produces manure.

Premier, two Liberal staffers have even—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to tell the member I'm not overly impressed with that, and the tenor

of what was said is not acceptable. But I'll allow the member to decide if he wants to withdraw himself.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, two Liberal staffers have even more explaining to do for the deleted and destroyed emails. Craig MacLennan, the former energy chief of staff, now with a plum appointment at OLG, and Sean Mullin, the former policy adviser to the Premier, swore under oath they were screened off the file in April 2011, yet we presented emails yesterday that show MacLennan and Mullin deeply involved in the Oakville matters late into May and June of 2011. Conveniently, Mullin's email account is missing, and MacLennan admitted to the committee he deleted his emails.

Premier, can you tell Ontarians, what exactly are you hiding in these emails?

Hon. John Milloy: The witnesses in question come before the committee and they testify under oath in good faith. These are matters to be left to the committee.

But, you know, there is a bigger issue here, and that is why the Progressive Conservative Party seems to conveniently forget that they opposed the gas plants in the last election, to the point where their candidate had robocalls that were out there against them. I know that the Progressive Conservative Party probably regrets those robocalls. They have 85,000 reasons to regret robocalls.

The fact of the matter is, that was part of the campaign. Why will their candidates not come before the committee? Why will they not talk about their costing? Why are they pushing this whole committee matter, this whole subject matter, to the side? What do they have to hide?

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Today, a busload of people made the trip from Kingston to Queen's Park because they want you to listen to them and to the thousands of people in their community. They are here to tell you that they do not want their new hospital to be a public-private partnership. They do not want it to be a P3.

Research has shown us that P3 hospitals cost 16% more than conventionally tendered hospitals. The residents of Kingston want their health care dollars spent on health care, not funnelled to the bank accounts of private for-profit companies, most of them offshore.

My question is simple: Will the Premier listen to the people of Kingston and stop the wrong-headed P3 plan for their hospital?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually have had the opportunity to speak to a number of the people in Kingston who are concerned about this. What I have heard overwhelmingly is that the people of Kingston want this hospital to be built. They want the hospital to be built. They want the hospital to be publicly owned, which it will be. It will be a publicly owned institution.

So the reality is that we need to get this important piece of infrastructure built. We are doing everything in our power to do that. I can assure the people of Kingston that this will remain a public institution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: The people of Kingston have seen what happens when a hospital is a P3. They have seen wasted taxpayers' dollars. They have seen dirty hospitals—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

M^{me} France G  linas: They have seen cuts to patient care. They have seen broken promises.

In April, 10,000 of them came out for a vote to tell you to stop the P3 hospital. I have their ballots with me. I will deliver cases of them, 10,000 of them, to you. Premier, hospitals only succeed when they have the support of their community. Right now, the people are telling you that you are setting up this new hospital to fail.

I ask again: Will the Premier listen to the people of Kingston who came here today? Will the Premier listen to the 10,000 people who took the time to vote? Will the Premier listen to the thousands more who want you to stop this wrong-headed P3 plan? Will the Premier listen—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The people of Kingston very clearly want this hospital to be built, and they want it to be built now. If they don't want a P3 hospital or an AFP model, they can wait. They can wait for a long, long time. If they want the hospital built now, this is the model under which we can build it now. We're replacing a hospital that is over 100 years old. This hospital will provide much better care for the people who need access to it.

I've met with the Sisters of Providence. They are delighted that we're moving forward with this. If it's good enough for the Sisters of Providence, if the Sisters of Providence support this, then I am very proud to support it too.

1130

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last month, the minister announced changes to physiotherapy services in Ontario that will be implemented this summer. Many seniors in my riding of York South–Weston have been expressing concerns about these changes. They are being told that they will no longer be able to access physiotherapy and exercise classes in the community or in their retirement homes. And many have heard that physiotherapy will now be capped at 12 sessions, down from 150. Could the minister please explain what these changes will mean for Ontarians who need physiotherapy services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for this very important question. I welcome the opportunity to debunk some of the myths that are being spread by those who have a vested interest in the current model. The changes we're making to physiotherapy will significantly expand access to exercise classes, falls prevention classes and individual physiotherapy. We're doing this because the seniors of this province are depending on us to provide the best possible care. Let me be clear: Eligibility will remain the same. Seniors who are covered today will continue to be covered under the new model. Some 218,000 more Ontarians will be able to access this government-funded program. Exercise and falls prevention classes will be offered in the community and in retirement homes across the province. The classes are not being cut; they are being expanded. There will be no cap on the number of services people may receive—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Minister. Many seniors will be relieved that their services are not being cut, and many more will be encouraged by the fact that they should be expanded. However, some seniors in my riding, in York South–Weston, and I'm sure across Ontario, are being told that the government is cutting funding on physiotherapy services. They are also being told that current providers can offer these services to housebound seniors at a lower cost than community care access centres would under the new plan. Could the minister tell us if these claims are true?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me be clear: There will be no cap on the number of physiotherapy services that people can get if they need them. There will be many more locations from which these people can choose where they want to receive it.

The fact is we're increasing the budget for physiotherapy exercise and falls prevention classes, from \$146 million to \$156 million a year. It is not true that current providers can offer this service at a lower cost under the old model than through CCACs. Last year their average cost was \$750 per client compared to the CCAC average of \$480. Under the old system, costs are increasing at an unsustainable rate and care is uneven across the province.

The changes that we're introducing will allow us to offer exercise classes, falls prevention classes and high-quality, one-on-one physiotherapy to twice as many Ontarians in the community. I'm committed to doing the right thing.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, today I will be tabling my private member's bill titled Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act. This bill will shut the door on Quebec construction workers and contractors coming into Ontario.

In spite of countless agreements between Ontario and Quebec, Ontario construction contractors and workers have been virtually forbidden from working in the prov-

ince of Quebec, while Quebecers have had completely unfettered access to the eastern Ontario construction market. Ontarians believe in open borders but they are being taken advantage of and ultimately losing good jobs without equal access.

Minister, do you believe that working men and women in eastern Ontario are getting fair access to the Quebec job market?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first thank the member opposite for bringing forward this issue. I want to thank the member for reaching out to me. We had an opportunity to sit down yesterday and talk about his bill. I look forward to the introduction of the bill and reviewing it. I've said to the member opposite that we'll work together.

One thing was clear from our conversation yesterday, that both our goals are aligned, and that is to create more good jobs for Ontarians. No government has done more to create jobs for Ontarians. The kinds of investments we have made and continue to make in our universities, colleges, schools, hospitals and community sectors—billions of dollars—have resulted in good construction jobs for Ontarians.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve a fair shot at competing for work in other jurisdictions, and that's what I and this government will fight for. But in order to ensure that, what we need to do is focus on fixing the problems but not creating new ones, and I look forward to speaking further in the supplementary to the member's question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait for that to give you the supplementary, so you can hear my response.

Supplementary.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Minister, the original Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act became law in 1999 to solve this worker mobility problem with Quebec. It was repealed in 2006 when the government signed the agreement on labour mobility between Ontario and Quebec. Since 2006, Quebec has gone back to their old ways of creating mountains of red tape and harassment activities that effectively shut Ontario contractors and workers out of the Quebec construction market and make those jobs unattainable to Ontario workers. Minister, will you and your eastern Ontario colleagues support the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act and work with me and the people of eastern Ontario to try to open the door to fair trade with Quebec or, failing that, slam the door shut?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

The Attorney General is now inches away from being warned, and if he says one more word, he will be.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're selling out every worker in eastern Ontario by this if you don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, I would like you to come to order, please, because I'm in the middle of chastising somebody over here.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And those kinds of comments are not wanted either.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think what we need to really focus on is developing and building co-operation and fairness for both provinces, and that's exactly what the 2006 labour mobility agreement between Ontario and Quebec had done. It had resolved years of disputes over construction labour mobility. Now, under the agreement, qualified Ontario construction workers can also work in Quebec, not to mention that under the agreement the Jobs Protection Office works—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —with Ontario workers to help resolve disputes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me try it again: Order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —and also, in 2009 we started a head start program to ensure that we work with Ontario workers in creating opportunities for them in Quebec.

There will be a five-year effectiveness study that will be worked at as a result of the agreement. I think we should wait for that study to see what evidence we can decipher from over the last five years and then work on it further.

SENATE OF CANADA

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Two years ago, former Premier Dalton McGuinty took a pretty simple position on the Senate. This is what he said: "Ontario's position on Senate reform: Abolish the Senate." Why has the Premier abandoned that position?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is a pleasure to have the member from Ottawa Centre in the House today.

I will say to the member of the third party, as I have said to my colleague, that my position is actually that I don't think that chamber of sober second thought is a bad idea. Do I think it needs to be reformed? Absolutely. I think that there are definitely reforms that should take place, and that should be a conversation across the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You know, Canadians watching the series of Senate scandals unfold don't think that appointed senators, especially those who abuse their privilege, represent Canadians' interests or their values, and until today their government seemed to agree. Again, I'm going to quote the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty. He said, "I think, frankly, to reform it in any substantive way is just not possible."

I just don't think we need a second, unelected, unaccountable body. Why has the Premier abandoned that reasonable position?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what the member for Ottawa South and I would categorically agree on is that there is no tolerance for abuse of taxpayers' dollars—absolutely.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you can tell, I kind of let that one play itself out.

The Premier will wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But there's so much to say, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased that the members of the opposition have such enthusiastic energy. I do believe that where there is abuse of taxpayers' dollars, we have to respond and we have to be held accountable. I've made that very clear.

On the issue of the Senate, I believe that it is possible to reform the Senate. I believe that the abuses, that the discussion at the federal level, is unacceptable. We need to have that discussion across the country.

DEFERRED VOTES

2013 ONTARIO BUDGET

Deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Sousa, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do have a deferred vote on the budget motion.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 2, 2013, Mr. Sousa moved, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

All those in favour of Mr. Sousa's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craltor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika

Duguide, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwintar, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah

Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.

Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheryl

Mauro, Bill
McGuinity, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Taylor, Monique
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried. It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to inform the House that I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please rise.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province of Ontario for the year ending March 31, 2014, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature one of my constituents, the founder and CEO of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, Eleanor McMahon, who is here for the fifth annual Ontario Bike Summit and Share the Road's MPP reception, being held today from 4 to 7 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Aujourd'hui, c'est une journée bien spéciale à Queen's Park; c'est l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter Major Elizabeth Allard, Maryse Baillairgé, Jean-Luc Bernard,

Peter Hominuk, Gérard Paraghamian et Linda Savard. Bienvenue à Queen's Park, tout le monde.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. We're glad you're with us.

Further introductions?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend, Walter Pamic, who is with Merit Ontario and flew here today to help us with a bill that we're going to table in a few minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARBITRATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Communities across Ontario have for some time expressed frustration with the government's unwillingness to make needed changes to the arbitration system for municipal contracts. Earlier this year, the member for Simcoe-Grey brought forward a private member's bill that would have remedied this. However, the government, with help from the NDP farm team, voted it down, leaving towns and cities across Ontario even more exasperated.

On May 13, the city council of North Bay passed a resolution noting the negative financial impact the provincial arbitration system has on communities. They note that arbitration systems don't include a municipality's "ability to pay," putting further burden on the tax base. They also note that this government, in its throne speech, indicated it would "sit down with partners across all sectors to build a sustainable model for wage negotiation...." North Bay council resolved that "all parties ... support and consider, at the legislative level, a community's ability to pay in regards to the arbitration system." The status quo is no longer affordable, and the government can't keep its head in the sand on this issue any longer.

I can tell you that when I served as mayor of the city of North Bay and sat across the negotiating table with the arbitrator, we had spent a considerable amount of money on our city's negative ability to pay for these increases. We handed it to the arbitrator; all he did was slide it right back at me unopened—all of the thousands of dollars that we spent—and said to me, "I don't have to take your ability to pay into account."

INVESTING IN OUR DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Last week, 12 young people from my riding received a scholarship for their post-secondary education, gained access to employment opportunities and were honoured for their leadership in Trinity-Spadina. The Investing in Our Diversity Scholarship Program is organized by the Scadding Court Community Centre, whose hard-working staff and innovative

programming have made it an important community hub and important local resource.

The scholarships are sponsored by local businesses, the Toronto Police Service, the University of Toronto, the Ontario College of Art and Design, Mount Sinai Hospital and people committed to diversity and inclusion from across Trinity-Spadina and Toronto.

This is the largest community-based scholarship program in the city of Toronto: 203 scholarships have been awarded over 11 years, valued at over \$500,000.

I would like to congratulate this year's recipients from Trinity-Spadina: Jeannette Mbabazi, Barry Zhuang, Shahzia Afghan, Zeenat Afghan, Ahmed Ali, Kamran Chowdhury, Lin Yin Lin, Katherin Orias Nguyen, Hannah Barnard-Chumik, Rashika Shalana Noel, Sakinna Gairey and Bryan Chavez.

These young people have worked hard to make Trinity-Spadina a better place, and their leadership is an immense asset to the community. I would like to thank them all for their contributions and wish them all the best in their future studies.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Mike Colle: As you know, Mr. Speaker, last year, with the help with of the member from Parkdale, MPP Cheri DiNovo, and the member from Thornhill, MPP Peter Shurman, we passed a bill declaring the month of May as Jewish Heritage Month in the province of Ontario.

This is the second year, and throughout the month of May there have been celebrations and recognitions all across Ontario honouring the incredible contributions Ontarians of Jewish heritage have made to our great province for over 225 years, going back even before the War of 1812, where they volunteered in great numbers.

Today, we're having a reception here at Queen's Park honouring this great month, and we've got incredible activities. We've got wonderful food, we've got kosher wine from Mazel Wines, we've got Caplansky's with deli sandwiches, Katz's Deli in my own riding, Milk 'n Honey Restaurant with their appetizers and kosher fruit tray, and the infamous—famous—United Bakers, which has been around for so long.

So today we're going to have it opened by my rabbi, Rabbi Yossi Sapirman, from Beth Torah. We're going to have the Consul General of Israel—DJ Schneeweiss is going to be here, and Dara Solomon from the Ontario Jewish Archives is going to be here with a wonderful display and video about being Jewish in Ontario.

We invite all members of the Legislature to come and celebrate Jewish Heritage Month with great food, great people and great heritage today at 5:30.

HALTON FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Over the last couple of months we here in the Legislature debated the Local Food Act. We talked about the importance of protecting jobs in our

valuable farmland and green spaces. We talked about the importance of educating our children and youth about food and nutrition. And every day, while we talked, children across Ontario rolled out of bed and made their way to class despite a nutritional disadvantage. Struggling students can't close the achievement gap when they start each day on unequal footing.

Since 1997, Halton Food for Thought has dedicated itself to addressing that gap. It supports breakfast, emergency lunch or healthy snack programs to students throughout Halton region, promoting the link between healthy food choices and improved learning.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of its staff and volunteers and its passionately committed executive director, Gayle Cruikshank, Halton Food for Thought now runs nutritious programs at roughly 100 sites, reaching more than 21,000 students.

This past week, I had the great pleasure of being part of the organization's fourth annual breakfast gala, which focused awareness on its edible garden and farm-to-school programs in Halton schools. Efforts like these feed students, but more importantly, they nourish hope of a bright future for these children.

IRENE ATKINSON

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today with great good news. Many of us know the name Irene Atkinson. She is a long-standing—over 30 years—trustee in Parkdale-High Park and she was the victim of a terrible fire. In fact, when I first visited Irene after the fire, she was on a ventilator, in an induced coma, and we feared the worst.

Now, thanks to prayer—I have to put it out there—an unbelievable array of support; Irene would say so herself, the love and care of her three wonderful daughters—Maggie, Pam and Julie, thank you—Irene is up and walking.

I visited her last night. One could not be more shocked and gladdened and surprised than to see this woman, who was in a coma, walking, talking and right back to her feisty self. That's our Irene.

1510

She has always been and will be a force of nature: once a red Tory, then a New Democrat after the things Mike Harris did to the education system, but always a force of nature. I say to anybody here—anybody—that if you are an enemy of public education, Irene Atkinson is an enemy of yours, because Irene Atkinson always stands up for the children, for the children and public education, and she will continue to do so.

So she's walking, she's talking, she's healing. It's a miracle. It's major. Thank you to all for your cards, your flowers, your good wishes and your prayers. It worked.

LISGAR RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Each spring, the Lisgar Residents' Association invites the western Mississauga community

to participate in their annual tree planting and community picnic in the Lisgar neighbourhood in Mississauga.

This year, I joined with the Lisgar Residents' Association, with many of my neighbours, Mayor McCallion, and other community environmentalists and nature enthusiasts at the tree planting at Cordingley Park. The 22nd annual Saturday tree planting was an opportunity to care for the environment and to meet your neighbours. After the planting, families enjoyed a picnic with games and activities for the kids.

Each year hundreds of trees are planted in Lisgar in northwest Mississauga. Today, those trees from years past provide shade, keep streams cool, protect the soil and beautify the neighbourhood even as they convert carbon dioxide to oxygen.

The Lisgar Residents' Association tree planting and community picnic also creates welcoming spaces for families to enjoy time together now and in the generations to come. We are teaching a whole new generation of kids to respect, sustain and renew nature through tree planting. Our congratulations to the Lisgar Residents' Association and to its energetic executive. You can find out more about the Lisgar Residents' Association's activities at lisgar.com.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, as you know, prior to my election as an MPP, I proudly worked as an electrician. On Thursday, May 23, I made a presentation to the Ontario College of Trades ratio review panel. They are considering revisions to the apprenticeship ratio for the electrical trade. During my presentation, I called on panel members Bernie Fishbein, George McMenemy and J. Richard Thomas to change the current restrictive ratio of 3 to 1 to a straight 1-to-1 ratio.

I was in very good company that day, with almost 80% of the presentations calling for a 1-to-1 ratio. Twelve of the presentations were from electrical contractors from across Ontario. These were hard-working small and medium-sized business people who came to ask the panel to revise this overly restrictive ratio and help them hire more young people in the province of Ontario as apprentices. I should also point out that over 98% of the written submissions to the panel called for a 1-to-1 ratio. The submissions came from electricians, apprentices, pre-apprentices, students and electrical contractors.

Speaker, if the Ontario College of Trades is truly a college by the trades and for the trades, I expect it will make the right decision and change this ratio to 1 to 1.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to let you know about a terrific event that's become a tradition in my community of Oakville. Earlier this month, St. Mildred's-Lightbourn girls' school hosted the ninth annual Home Town Games

Soccer Tournament for Special Olympics. Special Olympics soccer teams from across the province travel to Oakville to play in a tournament that has an emphasis on fun and excitement and is completely free of charge. By all accounts, it was an enjoyable day for all those who participated, including myself.

More than 100 volunteers, made up of St. Mildred's students, parents, faculty and staff, support this tournament by raising money through pizza, raffle and bake sales, and helping organize the day's events.

This is just one of the many events the students helped to organize within the local community, which demonstrates to me and to all of us the outstanding leadership of this school. A big thank you must go out to event organizer and teacher, Nicki Newhouse, and her executive team, as well as the many volunteers who have dedicated their time and their effort into making sure that this tournament, run on behalf of Special Olympics, was the tremendous success it has been year after year.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to an issue that is very important to the safety of Ontarians. With the Share the Road Cycling Coalition hosting their fifth annual Bike Summit this week, and here to visit us at Queen's Park today, I would like to thank Eleanor McMahon and the entire organization for helping to raise awareness on cycling issues.

Their mission is to make cycling safer in Ontario and to unite cycling organizations across Canada. With Eleanor as the lead, they have done an amazing job.

Working toward proving more safe cycling opportunities in Ontario's is important to me. Today I will reintroduce my private member's bill to require a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincial highways. This would be accomplished when roads are being rebuilt or resurfaced.

I believe there would be many benefits for Ontarians that would result from paving more shoulders of Ontario's highways. These benefits include safer cycling opportunities, more cycling tourism, a healthier population with the benefit of reduced health costs, reduced road maintenance costs and safer driving conditions for automobiles and commercial vehicles.

I believe that Ontario has the opportunity to be a national cycling destination. Just as the Route verte cycling network in Quebec contributes over \$100 million to the Quebec economy annually, Ontario can also share in the economic benefits that are associated with creating more opportunities for active transportation in the province.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind all members of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition event today and encourage them all to attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY), 2013

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2013 (PROTECTION CONTRE LE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This bill will expand the scope of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to include carbon monoxide. It would allow the requirement for carbon monoxide alarms in all homes.

The short title is the Hawkins Gignac Act, in memory of a family from my riding of Oxford, who were tragically killed by carbon monoxide when their fireplace exhaust became blocked.

This bill has been modified to include changes requested by the Ministry of Community Safety. We've shown we are willing to work together to get this passed and protect Ontario families from carbon monoxide poisoning. I hope that all members will now work with us to pass this bill before any more tragedies occur.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to give second and third readings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman has asked for unanimous consent to give second and third readings to this private member's bill. Agreed?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no. Introduction of bills?

1520

KINGSGATE II LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive Kingsgate II Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

KINGSGATE III LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr19, An Act to revive Kingsgate III Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

KINGSGATE IV LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr20, An Act to revive Kingsgate IV Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WESTMOUNT RIDGE ASSOCIATES
LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr21, An Act to revive Westmount Ridge Associates Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ELECTRONIC PERSONAL HEALTH
INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS
SUR LA SANTÉ FIGURANT DANS
UN DOSSIER DE SANTÉ ÉLECTRONIQUE

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne les dossiers de santé électroniques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I say that the ayes have it. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES
PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS
EN COMMUN

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to require the Minister of Transportation to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's Highway. The minister is required to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's Highway when there is a significant undertaking to repave or resurface that portion. However, the minister is not required to construct paved shoulders where doing so would be impractical. These paved shoulders must be at least one metre wide and must be marked with a sign warning drivers to watch out for and share the road with pedestrians and cyclists.

If the minister has not made any regulations prescribing portions of the King's Highway within one year after this bill receives royal assent, the minister must table a report in the Legislative Assembly that provides reasons why such regulations have not been made and that describe the progress that has been made in identifying the portions that will be prescribed.

FAIRNESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET ACT
(CONSTRUCTION LABOUR MOBILITY),
2013LOI DE 2013 PORTANT QUE LA JUSTICE
N'EST PAS À SENS UNIQUE (MOBILITÉ DE
LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE DANS L'INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act respecting labour mobility in the construction industry aimed at restricting access to those taking advantage of Ontario's policy of free mobility / Projet de loi 80, Loi sur la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre dans l'industrie de la construction visant à restreindre l'accès de ceux qui profitent de la politique de libre mobilité de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This act will prohibit Quebec construction contractors and workers from being able to come to Ontario and work on provincial government contracts or municipal government contracts, and will also place some limitations on Quebec construction contractors and workers working on private contracts in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It gives me great pleasure to introduce our government's Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013, or EPHIPA. This proposed new legislation would amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, 1990, and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

These amendments, if passed, would enable our government to fulfill our commitment to provide a safe and secure electronic health record, or EHR, for all the people of this province by 2015 while, at the same time, protecting the privacy of their personal health information.

The creation of shared electronic health records is critical to health system transformation. Shared electronic health records will allow information about laboratory results, medication histories and patient care currently contained in electronic medical records to be shared between multiple health care providers within a patient's circle of care. The result will be improved quality, safety and integration of patient care.

In order for shared EHRs to realize their full potential, a variety of complex health information systems must be connected to each other. Care providers must be able to electronically share patient data in order for patients to move seamlessly through the continuum of care; for example, from a checkup to a lab result to a hospital procedure to rehabilitation.

Ontario's health care system is complex, providing universal access to high-quality care for more than 13 million people, regardless of where they live in the province. Through our action plan for health care, our government is transforming health care so that all patients can have access to the right care, at the right time and in the right place. That means delivering the right care through family doctors, nurse practitioners, community health centres, hospital emergency rooms, physician specialists, home care providers and others.

We want to help our health care providers to work together as a team, with patients' care at the centre.

1530

Secure, shared electronic health records that protect every patient's personal health information is a key

enabler of this transformation. It will help transform our health care system from using mostly paper-based records to fast and efficient electronic sharing of data among authorized health care providers anywhere in the province.

But being fast and efficient is only part of the picture. Electronic sharing of information must also be secure. It must be designed in such a way as to protect the patient's privacy. That is why the proposed legislative amendments would provide individuals with control over who has access to their medical information in a shared electronic health record. They would establish rules for health care providers in using shared EHRs and would double existing penalties for privacy violations for those handling personal health information.

The proposed legislative amendments would also establish privacy and security requirements for shared electronic health records. They would clarify the authority under which health care providers may collect, use and disclose personal health information and shared EHRs. They would establish rules respecting an individual's right to issue a consent directive to mask his or her personal health information. They would clarify the limited circumstances under which a health care provider may override a consent directive. They would support treatment decision-making and enable a high standard of clinical care; for example, improved drug interaction check capability. They would establish a multi-stakeholder committee whose role would be to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters related to electronic health records.

It's important to note that we've held consultations about this proposed legislation between April 2011 and December 2012 with stakeholders, and we've collaborated closely with our partners to develop a policy and privacy framework to enable shared electronic health records. These partners include the Information and Privacy Commissioner, eHealth Ontario, nursing associations, medical associations and health professional regulatory colleges.

I am very pleased to say that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has expressed her support for the proposed amendments on the grounds that they will support shared electronic health record development while also protecting privacy.

Our government has already made significant progress toward implementing the elements of an electronic health record and toward moving related priorities forward. Now more than 10,000 community-based physicians and specialists use electronic medical records to care for more than nine million Ontarians.

In fact, two out of three Ontarians currently benefit from an electronic medical record. Chances are you have an electronic medical record in your physician's office. I know I do. That means details about the care you receive from a family doctor, specialist, nurse, dietitian or other health provider is captured electronically. We've worked hard to ensure that the personal health information contained in an electronic medical record remains secure and private.

Thanks to the electronic medical records currently in use, doctors are now able to receive hospital reports faster than ever. What used to take 12 days to transfer by mail or fax now takes 30 minutes or less to transfer digitally. Ontario physicians receive over 300,000 hospital reports into their EMR system each and every month, helping avoid hospital readmissions and reducing patient wait times. EMRs help to manage chronic conditions and prevent adverse drug interactions, to ensure that the medication history of all Ontario's seniors is accessible to health care providers across all hospital and emergency rooms, helping prevent adverse drug reactions in the event of an emergency. They help physicians get quicker access to online lab results and provide for a much more efficient and a much more integrated health care system.

This is incredible progress compared to where we were just a few short years ago. It means better care for patients, more efficient work for health care providers, and it's helping to save lives and improve our health.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Ontario's physicians, eHealth Ontario and everyone who has helped develop our electronic medical records for making this progress possible. Now we need to take the next step in integrating our health care system. We want to be able to share information about laboratory results, medication histories and patient care currently contained in electronic medical records through an electronic health record that is shared between multiple health care providers within a patient's circle of care.

Shared electronic health records are the next stage of electronic medical records. Shared EHRs bring together an individual's information registered with health care providers: your family doctor, specialists, health care teams and OHIP, the provincial health care plan. Eventually, shared EHRs will include data from hospital information systems, community care clinics and other providers as well.

Our proposed amendments would support better information sharing and coordination among all the health care providers and organizations a patient may come into contact with, resulting in improved health care, particularly for those with complex health care needs. For example, the diverse partners in a community health link—hospitals, primary care providers and community care—would all have access to the same health record for their patient. Better, more complete information leads to more integrated and coordinated care, so that no one falls through the cracks. Without these legislative changes, the implementation of shared EHRs could not proceed and the full benefits of this technology would not be realized.

Let me assure the members of this chamber, as well as each and every person in Ontario, that the privacy of everyone's personal health information is critically important to our government. These proposed legislative amendments would also protect each patient's rights to privacy and ensure that patients have choices about how their information may be shared across the health care team. They are part of our plan to protect the privacy and security of personal health information in shared

electronic health records, and I urge all members to support this.

SAFE KIDS WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: Before I begin, I want to welcome Louise Logan and Amy Padro from Parachute Canada. They are in the members' east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I am pleased to recognize Safe Kids Week, taking place from May 27 to June 2 this year. Safe Kids Week is an annual public campaign to raise awareness about childhood injuries in Canada, particularly serious injuries that can be prevented.

This year's theme is "Heads Up! Be Alert. Be Safe. Be Aware of Concussions." We know that there is growing concern about the effects that a concussion can have on an individual's health and well-being. I would like to applaud Parachute, a leading national advocate for injury prevention and organizer of Safe Kids Week. Thank you for getting Canadians talking about what we can do to prevent concussions from happening to our children and to our youth, and what we need to do when a concussion does happen.

This year's Safe Kids Week supports our government's efforts to ensure that all the people of Ontario can participate safely in sport and recreational activities. As Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, my goal is to see this province getting more engaged in physical activity without getting sidelined by avoidable injuries. This is why our government works with communities, schools and sport organizations to develop programs that will strengthen the sport and recreation sector.

An important part of delivering these programs is ensuring that proper safety measures are in place. For example, provincial and multi-sport organizations that receive funding from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport must comply and monitor the highest safety standards.

My ministry, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, has worked collaboratively with Ophea, a not-for-profit organization that encourages children and youth to participate in healthy, active living. Together, we have developed the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines. These guidelines outline safe practices to minimize the risk of injuries for children and youth during physical activity. We recently provided support to make the guidelines available to everyone, including schools, community sport and recreational organizations. These guidelines are also available to the public through the Ophea website. Our government recognizes that we can do more to educate the public about safe participation in sport and recreation. This is why we are helping to raise awareness about concussions: How to prevent them, identify them, manage and treat them so that the people of Ontario can lead safe, healthy, productive and active lives.

1540

We all have a role to play in the safety of our children and youth as they engage in sport and recreational

activities. Everyone—coaches, athletes, parents, students, school staff, volunteers and health care providers—can help to prevent, identify, manage and treat concussions.

Hockey Canada's recent decision to remove body-checking from peewee levels and below demonstrates the value of organized sports. Hockey Canada's decision is an excellent example of how sport organizations can work together to ensure a safe environment for participants, as well as offer developmental opportunities for our young athletes.

Our government is also making information available to the people of Ontario through our new concussion web portal at Ontario.ca/concussions. This web portal offers easy access to relevant and reliable resources that will help children and youth, as individuals and as teams, to lead active lives, injury free. We know that early detection of concussions and proper time for recovery can help reduce complications in the future.

Together with the support of our partners, sports organizations, school boards, health care professionals and organizations like Parachute, we will continue to help reduce injuries that can be prevented and help build a healthier, stronger and safer Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would very much have liked to have responded to the minister's statement on electronic health privacy records, but unfortunately I cannot. I would like to take a moment to explain the reason why.

Despite repeated requests from my office to get a copy of the bill so that I would understand what I was responding to this afternoon, I was not provided with it until just a few minutes ago. You can see, by the amount of material that we've been provided with and the seriousness of this topic, that I should have had that before now.

I'd like to read to you an email that I received back from the minister's office in response to my request for a copy of this bill: "Unfortunately, we cannot get a copy of the bill to you yet, but we can ensure MPP Elliott gets a copy shortly before the minister begins speaking on Wednesday. We're also happy to be available to her to answer any questions over at the Legislature while it's being introduced."

I would say, over and above the complete lack of co-operation with me and my staff, and the disrespect that was shown to them, this is also impeding my ability to do my job here in this Legislature and to respond in a rational manner. To expect me to be briefed while listening to the minister's statement and then make a cogent statement is simply not possible.

I'm not sure whether it's appropriate for me to raise a point of order while I'm making a statement, but I would also say that the statement that was provided to us previously that the minister was going to make in this House this afternoon—about 90% of it was not contained in this document.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you take this under consideration and provide us with a ruling with respect to this, because we simply cannot do our jobs operating this way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just so that the House knows, I sought some clarification to ensure that I was providing you with the proper guidance. The government is obliged to provide you with a copy of the bill at the time of introduction. It is not obliged to give you anything before that.

The second part of your concern raised could be valid if they did not share with you what was read in the House. You should have received a full copy of that. If something was sent to you before that is not part of the speech but you then got a copy of the speech that was delivered and you have that copy with you that is complete, then that has been fulfilled. If it has not, then the government's responsibility is to fulfill that.

I would offer the Minister of Health an opportunity on her point of order, and I'll come back to the member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. Let me apologize to the Legislature. I have just discovered that I read an earlier version, so I apologize for that. I would be more than happy to read into the record the other version, although I think substantively the information is the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate the clarification, and I would turn to the member from Whitby—Oshawa with the understanding that I obviously will reset the clock if there is a continuation of comments that you wish to make. The member may proceed.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that, and I appreciate the minister's clarification. But the fact does remain—and I don't expect that this version be read into the record, but I certainly would appreciate the opportunity to at least be given basic information before I'm expected to rise in this House and make a statement on a very, very serious matter. While there may not be a strict rule in this matter, I would suggest that common courtesy would dictate that in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would trust that in both members' situations, we would seek to get together to clarify that piece. I believe that the member has fulfilled her duty, but your point has been taken, and I appreciate that.

I think we now have the clock reset. The member from Durham.

SAFE KIDS WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a hard act to follow.

However, I would like to also welcome the sponsors of Safe Kids Week here today. I'm pleased to respond on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the members of the PC caucus. I assure you, as a parent of five grown children and 10 grandchildren, I have a genuine interest in Safe Kids Week every week. This is May 27 to June 2

and gives a heads-up to parents, youth organizations and the general public about the risks of concussions amongst children and teens—a popular topic. The goal is to raise awareness and to encourage parents, caregivers and the wider community to take action.

With high-profile athletes like Sidney Crosby suffering concussions, head injuries have a higher profile in professional sports and at the local arena, ball diamonds or playgrounds. The members will no doubt be aware that Hockey Canada directors voted at their recent annual general meeting to ban bodychecking for peewee hockey players.

Because of increased awareness and advocacy, which is what we're talking about today, we understand that concussions are brain injuries, which must always be taken seriously. It is important to recognize symptoms and to seek medical help and to educate the public. In addition to concussion awareness, Safe Kids Week is a time to consider all aspects of children's safety: pedestrian safety, poisoning prevention, drowning prevention, household safety and farm safety, plus the use of car seats and helmets, among other initiatives from Parachute Canada.

I would like to pay tribute to the dozens of sports organizations in my riding and indeed across Ontario and the volunteers that encourage children in their fitness, skill development and teamwork, and the many positive values through the sports that all children should be participating in. A few of these organizations include minor hockey associations in my riding specifically, of Clarington, Port Perry and Uxbridge, as well as groups such as the Darlington Soccer Club and the Clarington Orioles baseball team.

I am confident Safe Kids Week will enable families, sports organizations and young people to become more safety conscious. It should become part of a safe sports culture. Parachute Canada points out that preventable injuries claim the lives of more Canadian children than any other single disease. That's unforgivable. Injuries also cut short the lives of more youth than all other casualties combined. With renewed commitment to safety, these deaths can be prevented, along with the pain and suffering from childhood issues.

I would encourage all members today to work in partnership and to support Safe Kids Week, May 27 to June 2.

1550

SAFE KIDS WEEK

Mr. Paul Miller: My response to Safe Kids Week: "Heads Up! Be Alert. Be Safe. Be Aware of Concussions" are the themes for the 2013 Safe Kids Week.

The one I'm most familiar with is concussions from sports. When I was playing at a high level and refereeing sports, the player was expected to shoulder an injury within that game or come back for the next game—maybe missing a game or two at the worst, but back into the game. Thankfully, today's players are making it the serious issue that it should always have been.

When I played, I was taught how to take a hit, give a hit and take a fall. Recent decisions to take hitting out of peewee hockey leave me concerned about the impact of moving to the next level. When these kids leave peewee, they move on to bantam a year and a half later, where hitting is allowed. How will this child be prepared to take a hit, to take a fall, to know how to protect himself? We should find a way to teach these kids how to move to the next level.

I believe that there should be very serious consequences for any individual who deliberately takes a headshot. This should result in immediate suspension and serious repercussions from the team and the league. Any offender should be required to learn about the permanent damage that they could cause. A third-time offender should be suspended for at least the remainder of the season. Before the third-time offender returns, he should know that any additional incident will result in a long-term ban from the sport, maybe for good.

Another activity that can cause serious injury to a child is playing around water. Swimming and playing in the water can be a wonderful way to spend the summer, but we must ensure that our children can take some measures to protect themselves at all ages. Water safety courses are available across the province, and we should work with our municipalities, our education system and our child care facilities to ensure that our children are as water-wise as possible.

Not only our children need to learn about water safety. Too often, we hear of a water tragedy where the parents or caregivers have turned away for just a moment; it takes only a moment for a tragedy to happen. And let's not forget about our teenagers, who might be more inclined to take a dive into an unknown or too-shallow water. We can then take positive action by encouraging peer pressure to do the right thing, to take responsibility for the health and well-being of others, as well as themselves.

In all of these and the many other scenarios where being alert, safe and aware of concussions can be found, our government must take the lead in supporting—in fact, initiating—programs to ensure that we reach the prevention and awareness goals to reduce the injuries suffered by Ontario's children—the sooner, the better.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to echo the comments that were made by the member from Whitby-Oshawa, who had not been given any briefing about this bill. I came to my desk to pick up an inch and some of paper, and on the top of it is "Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act." I'm thinking, "Wow; what is happening here?" I have no idea what is in this bill. I was not able to follow it because, like her, the documents that I had had nothing to do with the documents that the minister read. It was a little bit weird, to say the least.

Never mind that; this kind of has been explained. I'm still disappointed. Here we are, in a minority government

where everybody goes above and beyond to try to work together, to try to make things work, to try to get results, and then we get this. I'm disappointed, especially at a time when we know that the protection of personal information is at stake.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that if you went to Rexall to get your flu shot, they took your information and thought, "Wow, look at all the databases of addresses that we now have. We're going to send all of those people some marketing information. Would you be interested in a discounted bag of chips at Rexall?" Tell me how a plan of care could include buying chips at Rexall, Mr. Speaker, and I will fall off my chair.

Right here, right now in Ontario there are for-profit companies using our personal health information for matters other than our plan of care. We have an example of this. Is the Minister of Health jumping out of her seat and saying, "We have to do something"? Absolutely not. It is dead silence from the ministry and the Minister of Health. It is actually the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner who is doing the follow-up.

I'm all for new laws regarding personal health information and protection. I get it, that personal information, health information, should not be shared, but more laws that are not enforced don't serve us that well. Meanwhile, it's full steam ahead for the for-profits to use our information and sell us chips.

VISITORS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Brampton West on a point of order.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like the House to join me in welcoming my good friends from India, Mr. Verinder Kumar, his wife, Puja Sharma, and their beautiful daughters. They came to Canada yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Randy Hillier: "A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—Drive Clean:

"Whereas the Auditor General specifically warned the government to delay implementation of the new Drive Clean test to ensure technical testing was completed and problems were resolved; and

"Whereas the AG also recommended that due to modern improvements in vehicles and fuels, vehicle emissions are no longer a major contributor to smog in Ontario and this program be phased out; and

"Whereas the fail rate for vehicles through this new system has skyrocketed due to the shortcoming of the test itself and not emissions problems with the vehicle,

making Drive Clean nothing more than a tax grab for the government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario eliminate the Drive Clean program."

Speaker, over 872 people have signed my electronic petition on this as well. I am in agreement with it, affix my name to it and give it to page Melanie.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Kingston Dental Coalition is very pleased that the Ontario government is moving forward with its Poverty Reduction Strategy by funding the CINOT Program, which provides urgent and essential dental care free of charge to children in low-income families. The Ontario government has also helped implement the Healthy Smiles Ontario program for children 17 and under who do not have access to any form of dental coverage. We, the Kingston Dental Coalition, see this as an important step towards poverty reduction and improved health. But we are requesting an implementation for funding a program which provides urgent and essential dental care for low-income adults, including seniors, who are living with oral pain and infection.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work quickly to implement the dental pledge made."

I agree with this petition, and I'll affix my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not necessarily in rotation, and in apology to the member from Parkdale-High Park: the member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to partici-

pate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to Christine to deliver to the table.

1600

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to share this petition, which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

“Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake the safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

“Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining the cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with

the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail.”

I totally agree with this petition, and I’ll give it to Alex to take to the table.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’ve got a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me by individuals in Newmarket, Toronto, Mississauga and Burlington. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children’s Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel” region; and

“Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario’s child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

“Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children’s Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children’s Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program.”

I completely agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature to it and ask page Vanessa to carry it.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

“Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a

CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

"Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

"Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

"Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and fall risks;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers."

I'm pleased to sign and support it, and give it to Michael, one of the pages.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

"Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

"Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and

people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary."

I'm going to give this to Hannah to be delivered to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I support this petition and will send it with page Jack.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly that was presented—they come from all over the province; this bunch that I got in the mail just recently came from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-

the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Michael.

1610

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario’s largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Michael, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is the member ready to go again, or are we all right?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You’re out of luck; we’re out of time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 29, 2013, on the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We left off with Mr. Leal; I don’t see him.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I’ll be speaking on this motion and the amendment, but before I do so, I’m going to move a sub-amendment to the amendment related to the programming motion by adding a new sentence under the original amendment, as follows: “In the event of prorogation, before the want of confidence motion standing in the name of the member from Simcoe–Grey is called, the motion shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper on the second day of the subsequent session and shall be called on the fifth sessional day of the new session.”

Speaker, today we’re debating this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Hang on. I’ll do it. I have to read it.

Mr. Hillier has moved a sub-amendment to the amendment related to the programming motion by adding a new sentence under the original amendment, as follows: “In the event of prorogation, before the want of confidence motion standing in the name of the member from Simcoe–Grey is called, the motion shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper on the second day of the subsequent session and shall be called on the fifth sessional day of the new session.”

Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This motion that’s before the House and the amendment and the sub-amendment—really, what we’re debating here is a motion written by the not-so-junior members of the coalition, the NDP, in addition to, of course, our PC amendments to the motions. For the record, the objective of this motion that’s before us is to cement the NDP budget demands into law and is motivated by a strong desire by members of the NDP and the Liberals to be on summer holidays soon. That’s the objective and the motivation behind this budget. For the record and for those who are watching, this motion seeks to diminish and end debate on the budget before all members have an opportunity to voice their constituents’ perspectives and their constituents’ concerns.

What I find is the most atrocious element of this motion is paragraph (c), which creates a new officer of Parliament without debate or deliberation by this House. Speaker, we know that there cannot be safeguards to the public interest with regard to public policy without the scrutiny of debate. This motion diminishes and prevents debate.

It ought to be evident, and I'm indeed confident that everybody agrees, that we need financial accountability over the disposition of taxpayers' money. I'm sure we all agree with that, especially in light of the numerous—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scandalous.

Mr. Randy Hillier:—scandalous, atrocious waste of taxpayer money, over the years that I've been here, by this Liberal government. But it's elementary and indeed foolish to believe that we can actually achieve financial accountability if we do not first exercise legislative accountability. For the NDP to propose, and the Liberals to agree to pass, this far-reaching bill, the creation of a brand new parliamentary officer before and without debate, I find disrespectful to this assembly; I find it disrespectful to the people of Ontario.

They are agreeing to create this new officer of Parliament. They've agreed to pass this bill although the bill has not been tabled in this assembly. It demonstrates a very cavalier regard to the people of this province and to the people of this assembly. I know the NDP like to portray themselves as standing up for the little guy, but I think in this regard their actions are betraying that persona, and it is a façade.

This motion is really about power, political power—those who will wield it and those who will benefit from it. But I can say with confidence it is not the little guy or the people of Ontario. This motion is not about the people of Ontario. I want to just reiterate this and read right from the motion.

This motion, paragraph (c), the creation of a financial accountability officer, “Two hours shall be allotted to the second reading stage of the bill.” That's on page 12 of today's orders—two hours apportioned between the three parties. “The committee is authorized to meet for two sessional days...” And here, “In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the first sessional day following clause-by-clause ... the bill shall be deemed to be passed ... and” will “be ordered for third reading...” And “Two hours will be allotted for third reading.”

Speaker, I've been in this House for my second term now. I know the NDP has always clearly enunciated and articulated the need for public scrutiny on policy. They've been a very, very vigorous defender against time allocations and closures. I find it disappointing that the NDP are now throwing away that history, throwing away that commitment when, really, in time of minority Parliament there is no greater time and more important time to uphold that scrutiny of public policy and that demand and expectation for full and wholesome discussion and debate of the government.

I'm not sure who's holding who to account these days in this Parliament, but looking at this motion it is certainly not the NDP. They are part and parcel with the government in seeking power. If either the Liberals or the NDP truly had the interest of the people of Ontario in mind, or they had an interest in the constituents, we would have seen a very, very different motion in front of this House.

Every member in this House, I'm sure, like myself, receives many, many calls, many emails and many letters

imploping and asking for assistance, demonstrating how government is not working for them. People like Cheryl Dunlop, who called me, who has now three smart meters on her little business in Lanark county and could not get any satisfaction from Hydro One. Hydro One, instead of fixing the problem, keeps sending her estimated bills—estimates that are based on previously wrong estimates—and atrocious bills with it.

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But there's no talk of Cheryl Dunlop and the problems of Hydro One in this motion. There has been no talk of it during this budget process. Hydro One just tells these people, “Pay up, because you know we're Hydro One and we're right.”

I also got a call from Robert and Shirley Grosse, who run a Bell Canada Enterprise office. Now, picture this: a Bell Canada Enterprise office. They received a bill from Hydro One for their seasonal cottage, with an error of over \$10,000—a \$10,000 hydro bill for a seasonal cottage. They were told by Hydro One, by their customer service, “Pay up, because we're right.”

I don't think the NDP and the Liberals were thinking of Robert and Shirley Grosse when they crafted up this motion that's before the House now. And you know there's something wrong when Bell Canada complains about Hydro One's customer service. That should be obvious.

But how about some of the problems we have with the delivery of services to those people who are truly—should be—government's commitment and concern, those people with developmental disabilities?

I have a constituent, Karin Steiner. Her son Nicholas has been on the emergency list for longer than I've been a member of this House and is still waiting for the services he needs for his care. No talk about that in this motion for Karin Steiner and her son Nicholas, or for Jean Ruttan's son Elden, who has been on the pressures and priorities list for eight years and red-flagged for the last four, and he still waits. He still waits. No talk about the Ruttans in this motion, or Danny and Terri Caughey's grandson Damien, or Ronald and Marjorie Girard's son Skyler, or Tammy Wallwork's son Phillip, or Stacey Kirkland's son Nicholas—all in the same position, all waiting for the government to recognize where the real priorities ought to be.

Speaker, I get calls and calls and communication from people who need assistance. They're not concerned about the power that the NDP and the Liberals are looking to broker with, with this coalition government.

Let me read you a little story from Casey Morden: “I am a local truck mechanic. I just finished paying my College of Trades ‘membership fee.’ Personally I find this to be a total scam, for the lack of a better word. I would like to hear your opinion on this issue. I personally don't understand how this group”—the College of Trades—“thinks making us pay triple the amount to keep our” trades “licence current will help the trades!”

He now knows what my opinion is, but there's nothing in this budget, nothing in this programming motion, that will help Casey Morden.

Yesterday, Speaker, I entered in a petition in this House under Lyme disease. Here is a message that I got from Alison Smith: "I just wanted to send you a quick note to thank you for creating the petition on Lyme disease. I live in Toronto and I have Lyme disease. It took five years to get diagnosed. The specialist I was seeing at the time confirmed the diagnosis through a blood test, but she told me that she couldn't"—could not—"treat me. She said that I needed to go to the US immediately because she and other Canadian" doctors "are at risk of losing their licence if they treat Lyme disease."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's awful loud on the opposition side. Your poor member is trying to do his duty here, and I hear you louder than I hear him, and his voice does carry, so that's pretty scary. So, folks, if you want to have your little group sessions, you know there's a room in the back you can go to. Thank you very much.

Continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I'll try to elevate my voice as well, just in case.

These are just some examples, as I said, that I'm sure every member in this House gets correspondence on. But what are we doing about it? Really, truly, what are we doing? What is this budget and what is this programming motion doing for them? We know what the answer is. The answer is: nothing. Nothing.

We've got a few parties here that are seeking power and not seeking to assist, to help, to prevent injustice. They're just seeking power for themselves.

Here's a constituent from Cloyne—another one of these hydro ones—a small business in Cloyne. Cloyne is just a little village on Highway 41 in my riding. This is from Maureen Marlin: "I am a new business owner in Cloyne, On. Due to the delivery charges my hydro bill is more than the mortgage on my property"

And what about the WSIB, a long-standing problem? There have been protests here at Queen's Park, and what are they doing?

Here's one from Paul Grenier: "Wow, I stumbled on this site today while doing some research. I work for an insurance company and we have been speaking to a number of contractors about how these" WSIB "changes are affecting" their lives and "their business."

"The initial premium burden is bad enough but what we feel is the real risk to business owners will really surface once a claim must go in. It's no secret that WSIB ... are fishing for" more "money."

I've spoken to the Minister of Labour on the WSIB. I've spoken with the three previous ministers of labour on the WSIB, and still nothing but the hardship and burden that comes out of the Liberal government, and now a Liberal government that appears to have the blessings of people who used to stand up for the little guy. The little guy has been lost in these actions in the House.

I think we need to take a look at government priorities, and before we prop them up, we ought to make sure they are doing a good job and motivate and encourage government to prevent those injustices and assist those people who are not getting the services and the aid that are the responsibility of government.

I'll just maybe end with this: In my riding, in the little town of Bath, we have a brand new gas-fired electricity generating station being built. They're building it on what used to be OPG land at the existing OPG Lennox generating station. The Lennox generating station operates at 5% capacity. It is a 2,000-megawatt generating station that sits idle 95% of the time. But we're going to spend another billion dollars to build a generating station right beside an existing one that does nothing.

At the same time, when you're at the Lennox Generating Station, look directly south into Lake Ontario and you'll see a beautiful island there called Amherst Island. Amherst Island is now going to have upwards of 40 industrial wind turbines. There's a big sign on Amherst Island as you get off the ferry there that says: "Amherst Island Is Not a Willing Host." But where is Amherst Island in this programming motion? Where is the generating station in this programming motion?

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Speaker, I'm very, very disappointed that with all the evidence before us, there are some members on the opposition side of this House who do not feel that it is their role to oppose but to console and to cozy up and snuggle and cuddle and look for that little perk of power at the expense of the rest of the people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Indeed, it's always an honour and a privilege to rise in this House. Before I start to say what I was going to say, I just wanted to address a couple of points made by my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. When I say "my friend," I mean it. We co-authored a bill—and it's a good bill—together. I know that he shouldn't have to answer for the sins of the fathers in his own party, but to set the historical record straight just a little, if he's talking about closure motions, Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario are the kings of closure motions, and were before his time. And if he speaks about energy, they also were the kings of privatizing our energy sources, hence the problems we live with today. So it's always best to check before you stand and speak in this House about what your party has done in the past—the not-so-distant past, at that.

But on to happier topics, and that's, first and foremost, the very reason we're here. When I was elected, lo, six and a half years ago, I was elected to come to this House by the good people of Parkdale-High Park—and not just for them, but for all the people of Ontario. And they asked me to come with a few specific instructions. They're not so specific as to be just for Parkdale-High Park. They truly are, I think, the wishes and desires of

most people in this province, and that is simple: to get something done, to actually accomplish something, to actually work with everyone here, because nobody here, I hope, wants a one-party state. What we want is an active democracy, where we actually debate—the give and take, the ebb and flow of ideas—where actually learn from each other, where we grow in this place to maybe expand our ideological horizons just a little bit, where we take into account the other person's views. That's the very essence, or should be, of any Parliament or parliamentary democracy. We were called to do that: to represent the people in our ridings and the people of Ontario by working together to actually accomplish something. We weren't elected to come here simply to stand on behalf of our parties and to defend our party.

In fact, if there's one thing I hear over and over and over again at the doors as I go out and canvass, it's this: Stop the partisan bickering and get something done, actually accomplish something. That's what we were sent here to do. This does not mean the same thing as giving up our principles. It's far from that. In fact, this is not—and I would be the first to say so, and so would we all in the New Democratic Party—a New Democratic Party budget. We have not morphed from Ontario into Sweden, into social democracy, into heaven. We have not done that with this budget. There's no question about that. What we have done here is to accomplish what people in Ontario sent us to do, and that is to move the markers forward on the files, to ask for some key symbolic actions from this government—quantifiable. And by the way, this programming motion makes it accountable as well for the first time, and this is a huge accomplishment, I have to say, with a financial accountability office and officer. This is a huge accomplishment that the New Democratic Party, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, has gained.

It was interesting, because, of course, we made our initial asks and we negotiated for more than those initial asks, and we were met, by and large, by the government in response to those asks. But then we realized something, and that is this: Especially in light of the gas plant fiasco, particularly in light of Ornge, eHealth, Presto—I could go on—especially in light of almost \$3 billion wasted with nothing to show for it, we needed some way of not only getting the government to promise to act on some of these files but actually to make sure that they do. Not just “the cheque is in the mail”—but actually receive the cheque. That's what we did as an add-on to the initial ask.

It was fascinating. We heard from some of the mainstream media, “Why are you asking for even more? You've already made your asks. What do you want? How much more do you want?”

The reality is, we asked and we got. We worked, and we got results. Andrea Horwath led, and Kathleen Wynne listened and followed. That's what happened here with this budget. That's what happened. It's not a New Democratic Party budget. It's a Liberal budget with New Democratic Party asks embedded in it.

By the way, what did I hear from my constituents during this process? Over and over and over again, I heard this: “Work with them. Get what you can. We don't want an election.” I defy any member here, including members of the Progressive Conservative Party, to say their constituents said, “Go to the polls. We want to spend another \$92 million. Yes, we do. We want to go to the polls,” only to come back to the same possible results.

That is not financially prudent action, and neither is it financially prudent to walk away from the negotiating table without even looking at what is in the budget, without even having a say as to what might be in the budget. All of us, I think, in our previous lives and whatever work we did and whatever life we led before we were elected here, had to engage in negotiations at some point. Quite frankly, I have never, ever heard of a negotiating process that's productive where one party simply refuses to engage. That's not the way negotiation works. That's not what our electorate sent us here to do. Our electorate sent us here, again, to get something done, to get something accomplished for them.

Had the New Democratic Party not engaged in this budget process, had we had a two-party state here and it had been up to the Progressive Conservatives, we would have surely had a far worse budget than we achieved. It would have certainly only been a Liberal budget; it would not have been a Progressive Conservative budget. It would only have been a Liberal budget, only reflective of Liberal Party needs, and we know what that looks like. We've seen the gas plants. We've seen Ornge. We've seen eHealth. We've seen Presto. We've seen what the Liberal Party does when it is unfettered.

We are here, as opposition members, to work with them, to negotiate and to hold them to account; not to walk away and let them do whatever they want. Is that what my neighbours figuratively and literally to the right really propose? That isn't progressive. That's not even conservative. That's not doing our due diligence—our elected due diligence.

By the way, in terms of holding the Liberal Party to account, were we to go to an election—committees out the window. All of those committees that are now engaged in looking into the Ornge scandal, looking into the chemotherapy scandal, looking into the gas plant scandal—all of those committees gone, no accountability for this government even there.

Is it not our due diligence, as opposition members, to hold this government to account? I would warrant, Mr. Speaker, yes, it is. That is our due diligence. By not engaging and by walking away, we don't do that. In fact, the very model of walking away this government exhibited with their prorogation. What the Conservative Party has done is essentially the same thing: walk away, do not engage, take your toys and go home. That's not democracy and that's not what we were elected to do. I can tell you that, with a programming motion and with the extra asks—which everybody said, “Oh, why are you doing it? Why are you doing it?” With the extra asks, we got even more accountability. That's what we got.

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Also, on the transit file—because there's been such misinformation on the transit file. The only thing this government put forward, by the way, despite the spin—there has been no actual action taken by this government on the transit file, except one, I hearken back, and that was to take \$4 billion out of Transit City, effectively killing Transit City. That, this government did, and it did it while the current Premier acted as transportation minister. That's when that happened, setting up the reign of Rob Ford and setting up the current debacle of transportation which is our fate in the GTHA. That's what this government did—the only action they've done, by the way, in the last small while.

Now we hear a lot of spin about what they might, could, possibly would do—and oh, by the way, they're just consulting—but we did hear some frightening words. The frightening words were around those toll lanes. I'll tell you why they're frightening: because it doesn't work, because the evidence shows that it doesn't work. It costs at least \$300 million to put into place. It will generate about \$25 million each year. In what way does that add to transportation in the GTHA? That's, again, why we need the financial accountability officer to look at what's fact and what's spin, to look at promises made versus promises actually delivered.

So let's look at what we got, because today, in a happy moment, we celebrated. We New Democrats, we came together and we celebrated. We had cake, even. The press came, and we said, "Here is what we have accomplished. With Andrea Horwath leading, and Kathleen Wynne listening and following, here's what we have accomplished for Ontarians." We have accomplished what we set out to—by listening to them, by the way—and consulting with thousands of Ontarians who asked for significant actions on significant files.

What were they? We asked that poverty be at least slightly alleviated. I listened to my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and I heard his litany of woes about what it's like to live in Ontario. Actually, I agree with most of them.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They did it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Oh, I agree. Yes, it was, in part, set up by his own government, but it hasn't been alleviated much by this.

I said in a response to one of the ministers yesterday that those people who are on ODSP, on Ontario disability, are actually making about 18% less than they did in 1993. That's the reality on the ground. It's no fun to be poor in Ontario, but what did we hear? "Get something done." We heard this from anti-poverty activists and those with lived experience as well: "Please get something—anything—done," because this was a government that was adding to the poverty burden. It wasn't alleviating it, so they said, "Get something done." We got something done on that file.

What else did we do? Auto insurance—we heard from our constituency that with the auto insurance companies making an extra \$2 billion in profits while cutting

disability benefits and upping rates, something had to be done. We listened and we acted. We asked for a 15% decrease. Of course, here's where the financial accountability officer in this programming motion is so critical. What did we find, and what have we been asking about in question period lately? Rates are going up. What's that about? My goodness, that's why we need the financial accountability office, which, by the way, to my friends to the right, is simply the mirror image of what is already in existence in Ottawa. That's in Ottawa; we want it here, and we need it here. My goodness. Yes, we need action on the auto insurance file.

What else do we need? We need action on the long-term-care file. Oh, it's terrible in long-term care. We know how awful it is. We hear questions about it. We've been living with the reality of it. We need a guarantee that people can get into long-term care, and we need that five-day guarantee on home care and long-term care—and we got it.

What else do we need? We need—and this is paramount—a look at how much money is flowing from this place to large, multinational corporations. Another \$1.3 billion is about to flow that way—\$1.3 billion that could go to transit, \$1.3 billion that could go—pick a file—to anti-poverty measures, \$1.3 billion that could go to housing, \$1.3 billion that could go to any number of files. No, no, Mr. Speaker, it's not going to go to where it's needed.

In fact, cabinet ministers have been standing up and proudly saying we spend less on social services than any other province, per capita. That's not something to be proud about. We should be ashamed of that. We should be ashamed that we spend less per student in post-secondary education than any other province. That's shameful. That's not something to be proud about. That \$1.3 billion could go to that.

Not only that; now they're making noises about ratcheting back the surtax on incomes over \$500,000. We gained that in the last budget. It was a significant gain, supported by 78% of all Ontarians, and they're talking about getting rid of it. That's shameful. That can't happen. Hence, we need again the financial accountability officer. We need that.

Finally, we need action on youth and jobs. Oh, my goodness. We have lost hundreds of thousands of good, union, manufacturing jobs in this province—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex might want to get in his seat.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We have lost futures for our youth. We need action. We saw some movement on that. We got some movement on that.

So here we are. Here we are. What did we do? We did what I was elected to do, what we were all elected to do: get something concrete done for the members of our constituencies and the constituents of this province. That's what we were asked to do. Had we done nothing, we would have gained nothing. Had we walked away from the table, like in any other negotiation, we would have won nothing. Had we immediately pulled the plug

and gone to an election, we would have spent \$92 million, come back with very, very possibly the same results—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Perth—Wellington, covering your face doesn't work.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—and lost the ability to hold this government to account. We would have lost the ability to hold this government to account, not gained it, because we would have lost the committees looking into Ornge, looking into the movement of the gas plants, looking into the chemotherapy scandal. We would have lost that ability as well.

So, in fact, contrary to what I've heard to my right, what we've done by actively working hard and engaging with this government—not because we expected to get our own budget, but because we expected to get something for the people of Ontario, and that is exactly what we have done.

I must say, in only about a year and a half, it is significant what the New Democratic Party, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, has accomplished for the people of Ontario. They get it, they hear it and they know it. When I go out and knock on doors, I don't say, "Guess what I achieved for you this term? Nothing." I say, "Here is what we achieved for you this term. Look at the accomplishments."

Again, enough? Never enough, Mr. Speaker. Not enough—there's so much more to do—but something. Whereas my friends to the right here, when they knock on doors, what are they going to say? "Guess what we've accomplished for you?" A lot of Sturm und Drang, as Shakespeare would say, signifying nothing. That's what they've accomplished.

Just to wrap up—I only have about a minute left—here is what we've done: With Andrea Horwath leading, Kathleen Wynne listening and following, we have accomplished what we set out to do, what we could do. We have done something concrete for the people who elected us here in the first place, and we will continue to do that. We're not shy about it. We will continue to negotiate. We will continue to press. We will continue to hold the Liberal government to account, which we would have lost entirely had we gone into election mode without thinking through the consequences.

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Our people have elected us to be thoughtful. Our people have elected us to be prudent. Our people have elected us to be practical. Our people have elected us, finally, like I said in the very beginning, to get something done. That's the mature way. That's the adult way. That's the New Democratic Party way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened attentively to the member from Parkdale—High Park as she addressed this assembly over the past 20 minutes. This may come as a shock to her and maybe to some other members of the assembly: I disagree with much of what she just said.

Ms. Cindy Forster: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, particularly those parts about the Tories.

I want to talk about the motion that is before this House right now. One thing that I'm disappointed in, that dismays me greatly, is the abandonment of the principles that the New Democratic Party used to hold fast to. I don't know how many times I've been in this assembly where they have railed on incessantly about how wrong time allocation and closure are to debate in this assembly.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Check your own history, Yak.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not about us, I say to the member from Kitchener. It's about your principles and something you have called sacred, and that is the right to debate in this assembly and, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before you get right into it, may I suggest that we cut the dialogue with each other. This is what I'm here for. I'm feeling left out, okay? So let's direct it to me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I will endeavour to include you in everything, Mr. Speaker. I will put some cotton batting in my left ear so I don't hear too much from the left side.

The NDP are going on and on about this financial accountability office, which is part of the deal to stifle debate on the budget, which essentially is what we should be talking about right now, and I will get to that in a moment.

But I want to talk about this financial accountability office. This is sort of the cherry on top of the cake that has cemented the marriage between the NDP and the Liberals, the consummation, if you want call it that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What about the annulment?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think we can go for an annulment. They're going to have to file for divorce if they're not happy.

But there are so many things to talk about and so little time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Sarnia—Lambton might want to get in his seat.

Mr. John Yakabuski:—and I want to make sure that I'm speaking through you, the Chair, in this debate.

I have to put on my glasses here—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Your cheaters.

Mr. John Yakabuski:—my cheaters, to help me a little bit with reading this.

Here's the mandate for the financial accountability office:

"Provide the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with independent analysis of the state of the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies, including the budget; and

"at the request of a committee or member of the assembly shall:

"(a) undertake research into the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies; and

"(b) undertake research into the estimates and all legislation of the government and opposition members; and

"(c) undertake research to estimate the financial cost of any proposal that would impact the province's fi-

nances and that relates to a matter over which the Legislature has jurisdiction, including government agencies and ministries....”

Speaker, a lot of research, but I didn’t hear anything about power, teeth and authority. There is nothing. This is what we’ve been sold down the river on as members of this assembly and shut out of this debate, I might add, Mr. Speaker, shut out of the debate on the budget by a deal between the third party, the New Democrats, and the governing Liberals. And this is the so-called crowning glory that they’ve sold us down the river on, this accountability office. Well, I’ll tell you, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in there—is there anything in there that will prevent another hydro scandal? Absolutely not. This accountability office—can they stop what happened in September 2011 when the Premier stood up and says, “We’re shutting down that power plant project and we’re moving it down the road. We’re shutting it down and moving it down the road”? Absolutely nothing could be done by an accountability office to stop that. Zero.

The member for Parkdale–High Park says that an election would cost Ontario \$92 million. An election is going to come at some time. Thank God we have elections. It’s called democracy. So at some point we’re going to be thrust into an election. It looks like it’s not going to be this spring. The Liberals have been saved and the NDP have been saved as well, so we’re not going to have an election this spring.

There’s going to be one at some time. Ninety-two million dollars: I guess that’s the estimate we keep reading in the Toronto Star. Every time they write a story about the possibility of an election, they talk about the potential cost of \$92 million. One billion dollars—well, \$900 million was the potential cost, according to the Minister of Finance as he testified before the justice committee last week. Under oath, he testified that the government had already prepared for a potential cost of \$900 million to cancel and relocate the power plants in Oakville and Mississauga, relocate them to Sarnia and back—\$900 million.

How many hundreds of millions have been wasted with the scandal at Ornge and eHealth? Billions. We see new legislation coming forward with respect to electronic health records today. We haven’t seen the bill yet, but let’s just hope that it doesn’t result in another Liberal-orchestrated, friends-lining-their-pockets scandal like we saw at eHealth. Let’s hope that we don’t have a repetition of that.

We could have had an election that might have cost \$92 million. But I’ll tell you, if that election would have happened and the Conservatives were successful, we would have a judicial inquiry into what happened at Mississauga and Oakville. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, with the power of a judicial inquiry and the ability for it to get to the bottom of every possible illegal, corrupt act that took place, we would make sure it wouldn’t happen again. But this accountability office is not going to do anything.

Look, accountability is something that—my God, nobody believes in it more than the Progressive Conserv-

atives. But it’s not just a word, it’s not just an office, and it’s not just another bureaucratic department being created. It’s a core belief; it is your way of life. If you believe in being accountable and in accountability, it’s the way you conduct business no matter what you’re doing. That is what would make the government and this Legislature answerable and responsible to the people of Ontario. An office in some ivory tower is not going to do it, but a commitment to the people in this chamber here—this is where the decisions are made. This is where laws are made. This accountability office will pass no legislation, will pass no regulation. This is where those acts take place. A guarantee and a commitment from the people who are elected here by the people in their home ridings, their constituents—that is what will change the mindset that has crippled this government over the past 10 years. It’s a belief clearly evidenced by its actions that they are not accountable to the people of Ontario; that they are accountable to the Liberal Party of Ontario.

1700

I want to go back to the budget itself, which is the reason that we’ve got this programming motion that is essentially denying the people of this Legislature the right to debate the budget itself, because when the budget bill comes forward the next time before this chamber, it is time-allocated. There will be two hours of debate. It will then go to committee. The committee will have two days of hearings, and it will then come back here for third reading—two days of debate, or there will be one day of amendments after committee—back here for debate, two hours of debate on third reading, and that’s it. That’s it for a spending plan of \$127 billion, with a deficit of \$11.7 billion.

Now, the NDP talk about what they accomplished in this budget. They’re very proud of what they accomplished.

Mr. Rob Leone: They had a party.

Mr. John Yakubowski: I’m sure they did have a party. They’ll probably have another one next week.

We went from a budget deficit of \$9.8 billion, at a time when we were supposed to be attacking and reducing the deficit—that was the commitment of this party, that the fiscal shape of the province was priority number one. Tackling the debt and the deficit was priority number one, so what did they accomplish with their deal with the NDP and the Andrea-Horwath-authored budget? Well, they’ve increased the deficit by \$1.9 billion, and that’s cause for celebration for the folks in the third party. They’re celebrating that they’ve increased the debt and deficit by that amount.

Ontario is on a train wreck of a ride if it doesn’t get its fiscal house in order. You cannot reduce the debt and you cannot eliminate the debt if you don’t at first eliminate your annual deficits. It’s not complicated; it’s pretty simple. If you continue to run massive deficits, which will be cumulatively added to the debt every year, do you know what we guarantee? We guarantee a very poor standard of living, relative to the one we have ourselves today, to our children, grandchildren and great-grand-

children going forward. If we do not have the fortitude, the wherewithal and the strength to make the decisions today to eliminate the deficit and thereby attempt to attack the debt, we simply are saying to our children, grandchildren and so on that your standard of living is going to be poorer than ours was.

Why? Well, already we're spending \$11 billion a year to service the debt—\$11 billion. There are only two ministries in this province that have a bigger budget than that: the health ministry and the education ministry. No other ministry comes close to the debt-servicing costs of this province. If interest rates change, and even on the track that this government projects—and we do not believe for a minute that they're going to stay on the track that they project, because next year, what kind of a deal are they going to have to make with the New Democrats to avoid an election at budget time? How much is it going to cost the people of Ontario to avoid that \$92-million election next year? Well, this year it cost over a billion, and more to come. Ninety-two million; a billion—that's a thousand million, for those folks out there listening.

What's the deal going to cost next year for this tired, old, corrupt government to survive? What is the deal going to cost my children, my grandchildren? I speak for everybody across this province when I say that. I'm not speaking individually or personally. I'm talking about everyone out there. What is that deal going to cost the young folks next year? At some point, the piper has to be paid. We cannot kick the can down the road year after year after year, hoping that by some miracle, a massive economic tsunami comes through and turns this economy around, just by accident, and the government just happens to be the recipient of good fortune.

That's like the person, Mr. Speaker, whose retirement plan consists of going out every Friday and buying tickets for the Lotto Max, hoping that one of those Friday nights they'll strike it rich and they'll be set for life. That's pretty poor planning.

That's what this government is hoping for: that by some stroke of good fortune, things turn around in Ontario in spite of their actions driving it the other way. They're driving this province down by increasing the deficit and increasing the debt. They're hoping that some outside force, some benevolent force from the heavens perhaps, turns this province around in spite of their actions. We know, as Progressive Conservatives, that that will not happen and they will not do the necessary things to turn it around. They will not do the necessary things to turn it around because they don't have the political will and they don't have the intestinal fortitude to actually say, "We've got to change."

So what did they do? They went to the New Democrats, who also do not want to go to the people, and they said, "What is it going to take for us to survive? How much extra spending will we have to inject into this budget to keep this government alive?" The New Democrats—I don't agree, obviously, with the way they would govern this province, but I do accept that they were made

an offer—came back and said, "These are the six or seven things that we're going to require in the budget."

Well, Kathleen Wynne and Charles Sousa looked at the numbers and said, "My God, we're in a mess in this province, but it would be a shame for the Liberals to lose power. We believe we have the divine right to hold on to power in this province. So, Andrea, your proposals are going to cost about an extra billion dollars." Fair enough. But you would think that they would at least look into their finances and say, "Okay, we've got to give the NDP a billion dollars in spending. Let's find a billion dollars in savings. Let's find where we can cut spending so that the deficit doesn't go higher." But no, they didn't have the will to do that. No, the deficit goes from \$9.8 billion to \$11.7 billion, up \$1.9 billion.

And now, coming down the road—or, I should say, the tracks or the tunnels or whatever you want to call it—is their Metrolinx plan, and their Metrolinx plan is going to tax everybody across this province. I say to the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I hope you have a good time trying to sell that plan up in eastern Ontario, about taxing your farmers and your rural people up there so that they can pay for your Metrolinx mess down here in Toronto.

1710

Mr. Robert Bailey: That dog won't hunt.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That dog will not hunt. But that's their plan, where everybody is going to pay for the fact that they've messed it up here in the transit plan in Toronto.

As Frank Klees has said, we need a select committee to look into where we can find and cut government waste. When you're spending \$127 billion a year, if you believe for a minute there isn't waste then you're living on a different planet than the rest of us are. There's tons of waste in that budget. It's up to us to find it. It's up to the government to appoint a select committee so that we can get to the bottom of waste in this province so maybe, down the road, instead of having \$11.7-billion deficits, we can finally start to balance the budget and attack the debt, which is an albatross around the neck of every young person in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to join the debate. I'm not quite sure how I'm going to follow the theatrics of my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who not only eloquently states his point, but does it with such gusto that it's very hard to replicate in this House. I truly appreciate the comments that he has made in this debate.

I want to perhaps take a little step back and talk about some of the things that I learned as a young academic prior to entering this place. I recall actually writing a paper—my very first paper, actually, that I presented at a conference. I want to talk a bit about that because I was several years younger at the time, had a lot more hair and I'm pretty sure that I was trying to look like I was wise, even though I was terrified presenting a paper at my very first conference. It was at McGill University in Montreal.

It was for the association of Australian and New Zealand studies of North America, otherwise known as ANZSANA.

The theme of the paper was to assess the relationship between accountability, transparency and democracy. I find that the subject of that paper actually fits the kind of discussion that we are having here today. Because at the end of the day we're trying to find the optimal level of that relationship so that accountability and transparency are being used to enhance democracy and to enhance the working function of a Legislature.

Now, I think that obviously accountability and transparency are central to what we do as legislators. Obviously, as opposition MPPs, our chief role is to hold this government to account—I think we do that each and every day we're here—and also, at the same time, propose the kinds of alternatives that we think are prudent and necessary to bring this province to a place we think it needs to be, which is certainly a change in direction from the path that we're currently on.

In the paper where I talked about the optimal level of accountability and transparency and how it relates to democracy, I remember—unfortunately I wasn't able to grab a copy before I could come to the House today but I do remember the gist of the content of the theory that I presented and the model that I presented such that accountability and transparency can and certainly do enhance a functioning democracy, but that it could sometimes go too far as well.

We, as legislators, come to this place and, on the floor of the Legislature, we debate things. We debate a variety of things. Sometimes we agree and sometimes we disagree, and such is the nature of what we do here. We debate the difference of what we think is right and what we think is wrong. Sometimes we view the same thing differently, depending on our outlook, depending on our ideology, depending on the party that we support and our outlook. That's an important thing, to have those debates, to have this difference of opinion and to talk about different things in a manner that is cogent, that is intelligent. That we can come to this place and speak our minds, I think, is a bedrock principle of our parliamentary traditions that we should never lose sight of. But sometimes we get into a situation where we see that accountability and transparency can be skewing the balance away from what we consider democracy, and sometimes we can see instances where officers of the Legislature or officers of Parliament become the overseers of what we do here. At the end of the day, they'll report, they'll see a situation, and they'll determine that a situation is either right or wrong. And that process of that one person saying something is right or something is wrong becomes the gospel of what we do here, and therefore it can't be contradicted in any way, shape or form.

Now, that becomes a problem, Mr. Speaker, because certainly if you were the sole determiner of what was right and what was wrong in this Legislature—I'm sure you would like that, because you see things in a particular way, but it might not jive so well with me, with all

due respect, Mr. Speaker, because I have different ideas and different beliefs that sometimes don't correspond with the way you see things.

If we start to diminish our debate and we start to remove that debate away from the floor of this Legislature and into a back office of some particular officer of the Legislature and we continue to do this more and more, what we effectively do is we diminish ourselves. We diminish our role as people who are responsible for holding this government to account. I fear for the moment where we rely too much on these mechanisms that negate our own role to perform the functions that we are tasked to do by the people of the province of Ontario, who elected us to represent them in this Legislature. That means that we can have a debate about different things and disagree and agree on different things, depending on the situation that may arise.

So there is an optimal point, and the more we talk about diminishing our role, hiving off our responsibility to hold this government to account, we are effectively, I think, diminishing the role of the opposition in the Legislature. And that role shouldn't be diminished; it should be enhanced. We should have the tools in place to make sure that we're doing the job that we are tasked to do, that the people elected us to do, which is to hold this government to account.

I see that in this programming motion, we see right away stuck in this programming motion a desire to set up a financial accountability office, which, again, is an office that certainly can potentially have a role to play in our Legislature, but it may be tipping the balance. We have an opportunity here to discuss and to debate different things, but in essence, we don't have enough time to debate something very important, very essential to our democracy, such as this, and to potentially debate the effect that this might have on our role as members of the opposition, and potentially I'm sure the government would want to obviously talk about how it affects their ability to govern, if it does. I think this is something that has to be debated much more fully, much more completely, and certainly longer than the 20 minutes that we may have allotted to each individual MPP, and certainly many, many members may not want to participate in this motion of substantive debate, and I think that is truly, truly unfortunate, because we're debating something so profound that it can effectively diminish the democracy that we have and the role of MPPs to hold this government to account.

The very moment we start saying that one person can have control of what is in the public interest, what is right or what is wrong, is the very moment we start to lose our democracy, and I can't for the life of me accept that we would continue to do this on a daily basis without the fullness of debate, without the fullness of understanding the pros and the cons, without understanding the consequences, both positive and negative, to this place and to our role as legislators.

I wanted to take part in this debate today to put forward this idea that we have to actually think about

these things, not simply as a backroom deal between the government House leader and the House leader of the third party, but to actually talk about these things that have such profound importance to what we do in this Legislature.

1720

Now, I note, Mr. Speaker, that we have proposed an amendment to this motion and a sub-amendment to this motion as well. That's important to note, because I know the sub-amendment in particular talks about one of my favourite things to talk about, which is prorogation and what happens to this motion and to the amendment to this motion in the event of prorogation.

I find it very interesting that the sub-amendment put forth by my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington had dealt with prorogation, because I realize that my friends in the New Democratic Party worked very hard over the months of November, December, January, part of February and I forgot part of October as well, when the Legislature was shut down for 129 days. I know they travelled the province to talk about prorogation as being some evil thing—shutting the doors of the Legislature; shutting us out from talking about the future of the province of Ontario. And yet here they are, about to support a motion that vindicates, in many ways, the very government that shut this place down for such a long time. Now, I don't know, Mr. Speaker, about how people wake up in the morning and look at themselves in the mirror and wonder whether they have the principles by which they were elected or whether they have somehow sold those principles out on the basis of looking at something as profound as prorogation.

I heard them complain over and over and over again about how poorly the government handled this file because it was running away from its responsibility to answer questions, very important questions, that we had here in the province of Ontario, particularly with reference to the cancellations of the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, cancellations that cost a billion dollars of our hard-earned money. When we go into our ridings, we hear this all the time: "I work hard, I pay my bills. I volunteer in the community, and every time I turn around the government seems to be wasting the very money I'm sending it." This has a profound sense of anger in people when they think about the implications of that.

Unfortunately, I heard from the member from Parkdale–High Park today that not only have they agreed to vote for the budget but they actually had a celebration. They had cake. They invited the press. They decided to have a little bit of a party to celebrate propping up this scandal-plagued government. Now, I don't know how the people of Cambridge will take that piece of news, that the party of—the self-professed party of the little guy is now propping up the scandals of the Liberal Party.

I think that I come with a sense of—I'm troubled by the very notion, the very idea, that there would be cake and champagne, taking part of a—

Ms. Cindy Forster: No alcohol.

Mr. Rob Leone: No alcohol. Well, that's unfortunate. Maybe the champagne will be cracked next week when

the budget actually passes, because there's real cause for celebration, that people are out not just \$1 billion but another billion dollars just to save their party, to keep them in power. That's very unfortunate.

I think what people in Ontario want us to do is they want us to be able to offer them a sense of hope. That, ultimately, is I think what we do on a daily basis. I, as many people know in this Legislature, am a new dad, once again. It's very important to understand that we should be setting up our future generation to the best of our ability. I know that on the day he was born, he was straddled with his portion of the provincial debt, which was far in excess of \$20,000. That's slapped on his back before he takes his first breath, his first feeding, his first burp, his first diaper change, and here we are in the province of Ontario that's not doing anything with this budget to reduce that burden on my kids. In fact, it's doing quite the opposite. We're now going to have an extra \$2-billion deficit next year.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins–James Bay might want to get in his seat.

Mr. Rob Leone: The public debt in the province of Ontario is going to go up \$24 billion more next year, which is just going to add more and more to the cost of servicing that debt. As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke rightly states, \$11 billion each year is being poured into servicing that debt—simply paying the interest payments.

Next year at this time, we're going to have \$24 billion more added to that public debt. That means that the interest we're going to be paying to service that debt is only going to go higher. That's notwithstanding a potential credit downgrade. If we followed the comments the former finance minister, Dwight Duncan, made yesterday, when asked what he thought the credit rating agencies would say about that government's budget, he said the credit rating agencies are going to have some harsh words for this budget. That is pretty interesting, because at the end of the day, what that will mean, if we have another credit downgrade, is that interest rates to service that debt are only going to go higher.

The potential is quite easy to see. We could be out another half a billion dollars—maybe another billion dollars—next year at this time, simply to service a ballooning debt that this government will not take under control. All that's going to be done in this Legislature when this budget passes—I'm pretty sure it's going to pass, because the third party has decided that they're going to support it. But who wears that decision to put our children further in the hole? Who owns that decision? Well, certainly the Liberal Party does. It's their government; it's their budget. But so too does the NDP, and they have to make sure they understand the full ramifications of the decisions that are being made here in the province of Ontario on the basis of doing that.

The deficit is going to go up \$2 billion next year—a budget that the NDP has decided to vote for—and the debt is going to go up \$24 billion. I fail to see how any of

that is going to help the children of this province learn and prosper, when more and more of the money we send in the form of taxation to this government is being spent on servicing debt rather than on core social programs that we both need and want.

I hope that we start thinking quite clearly about the kinds of changes we need to be making, at the end of the day, to provide that kind of hope to our future generations, to provide hope to even young people who are going through our schools today, who obviously are graduating with a good education, but they can't find jobs at the end of the day, and all the while, they have a mountain of debt that they have to pay off and no job that can do that for them.

This is the kind of thing that I think we've proposed. I know, as the PC critic for training, colleges and universities, that we've produced a number of white papers, one of which was on higher education and higher learning. We want to ensure we can transition our youth and get them that great education that leads them to a job at the end of the day. We have people without jobs and jobs without people in the province of Ontario, and that fundamentally has to change.

So, yes, we are in the process of not only holding this government to account, but we want to produce results for the people of Ontario as well. By doing that, we've come to the conclusion that the only way to get the kinds of results we need for our young people is to change the government that leads this province, to change the party in power; to have the people have the ultimate say. At the end of the day, this is a democracy.

1730

I've heard the comment over and over again that elections cost \$92 million. Well, if you're against the spending of \$92 million, you're against the very democracy that elected you to this Legislature. You cannot say and use this as an argument and be supposedly supporting the very democracy that we're in today. Some \$92 million is the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario when it comes to elections.

It's not an easy thing to continue to push forward for an election. Certainly, it's been a difficult thing because no one really wants an election. But at the end of the day, we've come to the conclusion that the people of Ontario need an election. They need to have an opportunity to have a decision on who is best able to lead this province to prosperity. And we're not seeing that right now. In fact, we're seeing quite the opposite.

So at the end of the day, let's put the people in charge, like it's supposed to be. Let's have an election and let's get this sorted out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: A couple of days ago or last week, the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath, stood in this House and made a comment: "You know what you're going to expect from the Liberals," and that's partly why they're going to vote for this budget.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that they do know what they're going to get. They're going to get an

Ornge scandal that wasted almost \$1 billion; they're going to get gas plants that are at least going to be \$1 billion; they've got the Green Energy Act that is putting up wind turbines in unwilling host communities and adding energy to a province that doesn't need it and wasting many, many dollars there. They've doubled the energy rates during their nine-year term. That's what you're going to get from the Liberals.

They've decimated the horse racing industry: 30,000 to 60,000 jobs in the province of Ontario wiped out because of them. The Ontario Tire Stewardship: exorbitant prices, up to 2,000% increases to agricultural producers and our small contractors across this province for no reason other than their poor mismanagement.

WSIB rates are increasing and just infuriating people; they had a good system before. The College of Trades: Fees are going to go from \$60 for three years to \$120 plus HST per year, and for what? That's not going to create one more job. The apprenticeship ratios: We want to bring them down so that our young people have an opportunity to work in this province in the skilled trades. We see the looming need coming, and they voted against us.

The Green Energy Act: We've had four private members' bills here to say we don't need the power, we don't need to do this right now, put a moratorium, and the NDP has propped them up on those types of things.

So, yes, they do know what they're getting with the Liberals, and I can't comprehend that they're that proud to stand up and vote with them for this budget.

Speaker, it's an interesting thing. A Prosperous and Fair Ontario is the title of this budget. The third-largest government ministry would be paying off the debt, if it was a ministry, behind health and education.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Paying off? Just servicing.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just servicing; you're right, Mr. Yakubuski. They're going to run an \$11.9-billion deficit this year, after last year's deficit. Again, it's cumulative. They've doubled the debt for this province in their eight years—the rest of the history of this great province—the debt has been doubled under their tenure, and yet we have a party that is prepared to support them, that being the NDP prop-up party. It's ridiculous.

I want to talk a little bit about these billion-dollar boondoggles this government is being rewarded—they're being rewarded by the NDP for this poor behaviour. Just think how many hospitals are not being built, like the Markdale Hospital in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, because they don't have the money because they have such a large deficit. Just think how many schools are going to close—three in my riding. Derby, Sauble and Hepworth are all on the chopping block because there's no money left for those schools in rural Ontario because they again have wasted and over-spent by millions and millions and millions of dollars.

How many affordable homes—we've had the housing co-operative here at least two to three times, just in my short tenure, and we keep saying we can't do anything to help them because there's not enough money.

We cannot continue to waste and then reward people who are overspending and wasteful. How many people with mental challenges could we have helped? They come to my office and they plead their case and they say, "I need help. I need some kind of help out there," and we have to turn them back because there's no more money in the budget of this Liberal government because they have overspent and wasted billions of dollars.

How many people could have received dental services? There are people out there who can't even have a dental exam because there isn't enough money in the system, and yet we can do this and we can waste \$900 million on a gas plant to save two seats.

How many people could have received an eye exam who are going without? That's a preventive one again. If your eyesight is not detected early, that can lead to significant things down the road that are going to cost our health care system five, 10, 20 times, some predict, because we're not there in a proactive sense. The only reason, I can say, is because the current Liberal government has mismanaged those funds and has wasted so much money that it's not there. They have backed themselves into this corner. They have nobody else to look in the eye except themselves, and they should be saying sorry to the people of Ontario.

How many people are requiring social services? Community Living comes to me almost on a weekly basis saying there's not enough. We have Keystone services in our community that have not had an increase in 20 years, and those people are going without because there's no more money in the budget, in the coffers of the Liberal government, but yet they're spending that type of money.

Speaker, it just boggles my mind that we're spending \$1.9 million per hour just to service the interest on our debt. Just think of what that could do for new jobs for those pages sitting in front of you. What type of a future are we leaving for them, if we continue to go down this path? This budget is nothing more than a reflection and a reiteration of what the Dalton McGuinty government was doing. Kathleen Wynne has tried to put a different spin. She's a little nicer with her smile. She spins the rhetoric a little differently. But you know what? It's the same old, same old: We're overspending, we're running deficits, and we're saying everything in the world is rosy. Well, everything in the world is not rosy.

Speaker, Metrolinx came out with a report, and now what the Liberal-NDP coalition is saying is, "We're going to add more taxes because we need more money." They've had absolute record revenues in their last number of years in office, and yet they've overspent and continue to run a deficit. Now they want to go back to the people and say, "Just get out more of your hard-earned money to cover up our mistakes."

They're trying to spin it that you're going to get better services. Well, I would suggest to you, before you ever come and ask someone for more services and more money for those services, that you look at the waste and the overspending. You have to be able to find the kind of

money that they're talking about for these services in the existing budget, if they just had the will and the conviction to do so. They're taking the easy route. They're trying to cover it over with rose-coloured glasses and make people think that everything is just wonderful and rosy out there.

The member from, I believe it was East York, today—sorry, Parkdale-High Park—talked today about how they want to get something, so they did this little horse trading system that they thought was good. They spun it to the public as if they're working hard for the people. I would suggest to you, Speaker, that that's hypocritical and they've sold out the people they purport to support, because with all of that reward for these bad actions in the past, people out there are going without: people without social housing, people without eye exams, people without dental exams—they're going without because this government is prepared.

They call them corrupt. We call the Libs corrupt, then they prop them up in the afternoon. How can they do that? How can they turn to their supporters? If they were to be asked straight up, "How can you support this government after all of those things I just listed that have detrimentally impacted the people of Ontario, those people going without?"—and they continue to turn around and say, "We want to reward them." They had a party. They want to reward them for an \$11.9-billion deficit. It's ludicrous. There's absolutely no way that you should be having a party. They should have been turning around and saying, "What can we do, as members of the third party opposition, to challenge them?"

That's part of our job, to be here and make sure we hold the current government to account. We're not going to side with them just so we can keep our seats and so that we can go out to our people and pretend to have made a difference in their lives. We're truly going to stand up and say, "This is the wrong direction."

There is a better way. There's a much better way. We need to ensure that we are giving these young people in front of you and those listening at home—children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—an opportunity of the province that we have lived in. We used to be the leader of Confederation in Ontario. We were the proudest province and we were the leader, and now we're the laggards. We have our hands out for transfer payments. That, to me, is not acceptable. We need to ensure that we do that.

I realize that there are certainly different philosophies in here, and the NDP seem to always want to say that we're just the bad guys and we're going to cut and slash. That's not the reality. But as I teach my children, and I think I do my due diligence, you have to live within your means. You cannot continually overspend more than you bring in in revenues and expect to have anything at the end of the day. That's not something that I will ever teach my children. I will also never teach my children—and I should mention that my children, Zach and Ben, are at home, hopefully watching this. They need to understand accountability. All of us make decisions, and at the

end of the day, you have to be accountable. You have to accept the consequences for your decisions.

My job here is to make decisions on behalf of all of the people of Ontario, particularly the great people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, so that we have a future that we’re going to be proud of and we look forward to with hope, not one that we’re going to sit down and let things—the last time, in the budget, a year ago now, if I recall, the NDP actually sat on their hands. They figured that that was their way of showing what they were doing for their people.

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This time, to give them credit, they’ve at least jumped off the fence. They’ve said, “We’re going to support it.” I don’t applaud them for that decision, but at least they got off their hands and they’re actually taking a stand. It’s the wrong stand—and it’s great, because if there was just a money tree out there, like they seem to think there is, that would be an easy way for us to have done it. We would have made that simple, easy decision as well. But do you know what? Easy decisions aren’t what we’re sent here to do on behalf of our constituents. We’re sent here to do what we believe is the right thing for the long term, the short term and the medium term.

Right now, we have a government that continues to go down the track that is going to take us off the fiscal cliff, and it’s going to bankrupt us. We’ve already heard it in this House many times. Our finance critic, Peter Shurman, has talked about if we get another downgrade, and the hugely negative impact that’s going to have on our province. If we do not have people who are willing to reinvest in Ontario—and at this point, with the highest energy rates and 500,000 to 600,000 people out of work every single day, how does anyone have confidence to come here?

This government across the aisle has doubled the energy rates. Why have we lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs? Part of it is because we have the highest energy rates, and are soon to have the highest energy rates in all of North America. I ask you, Speaker: What company is going to come to Ontario to locate, when they can go to one of the surrounding provinces who have much lower rates, who have much better opportunities and lower taxes through a lot of the things that they’re doing through the HST?

By the way, that government promised, “We will not implement an HST. We will not implement a health tax. We will not raise taxes.” I would suggest that in the next couple of days, we will probably hear, “We will not raise your revenue tools either.” We know that a revenue tool is nothing more than a tax. A tax is a tax is a tax. Metrolinx is nothing more than a tax to the people. They need to get their house in order.

Speaker, the other points that I want to make are very specific to democracy. Our province and our country are based on the fundamental principle of the people having the ability to say.

I would suggest to you that our government, after the last nine years, is going in the wrong direction. They’ve

doubled the debt. The deficit is going to be \$411 billion if they keep going. They say they’re going to eliminate it by 2017-18, but I don’t see how you can not reduce spending and continue to overspend and expect that you’re going to reduce this huge, \$230-billion deficit in the next three years. To me, it just doesn’t make sense. I’m not a mathematician, necessarily; obviously, they have no one in their caucus who is, either, or they wouldn’t have brought those numbers. I believe the Duke from Haldimand–Norfolk said that the other day. Their numbers just don’t add up. You can look at all of the tables and nice glossies that they put in here to try to purport, but if you just cut through it all and say, “How much money do we have? How much do we bring in? How much do we spend?”—at the end of the day, they spent \$11.9 billion more this year. They’re going to increase that again next year. Then, a short two years after that, they say that they’ll have a balanced budget. Well, I’m not certain how you’re going to do that. I fully believe that they can’t do that.

I want to get back to democracy. It’s a fundamental principle of this House that if the people lose confidence in the government, then it’s time for the people to have their say and make that choice. What we think should have happened here is to have had an election and let the people have a choice, because we believe there is a better way. We believe they’ve lost confidence due to the waste, the overspending, the deficit of \$11.9 billion, the corruption of the gas plants and the Ornge scandals—the boondoggles of those two alone should be enough for the great people of Ontario to say, “We’ve had enough of this direction. There is a better way.”

Certainly, with the NDP farm team jumping on and propping them up at every chance and rewarding that poor behaviour—although they do condemn them for all these misdeeds, but they’re still going to stand up and vote for them.

It is our opposition role to hold a government to account. Regardless of good times or bad times, our job is to hold them to account. We need to treat taxpayers’ money as if it’s the money of those children who are sitting in front of you, and every time we have the opportunity, we need to do that.

We need to ensure that every dollar that’s given by a hard-working taxpayer is spent with the greatest of care and respect, and that we get value at the other end, not just slough off \$900 million—without even an apology for about a month and a half, I might add. There was finally a “sorry” word said; I’m not certain that it was that sincere. At the end of the day, I think that what should have happened there is the Liberal Party actually should have stepped up, apologized and said, “We’re prepared to pay that back.” Let’s not forget that that decision on the gas plants was made by unelected campaign team officials. The Premier was around that table, and she needs to step up and do what’s right.

That’s what our job is: to hold them to account. We’ve caught them with their hand in the cookie jar. We’re not going to relent; we’re going to continue to look at that.

We're going to look every time we can now, because every time they stand up and say, "We're going to," and "It's good for you," how can we honestly believe that after all the things that we've seen in this House in the short 16 or 18 months that I've been here? It's just horrendous.

I continue to hear certain people from the third party say, "They're corrupt, Speaker. There are terrible, terrible decisions over there, but yes, we will prop them up. We will, because we have done some horse trading and we've got some things that we can try to make the public think are really good." Who is going to disagree with lower insurance rates? But I don't even think you, today, Speaker, if you could answer me right now, would probably suggest that that 15% is going to happen in the next year, if it will ever happen at all, but it sounds good in a sound bite, and that's unfortunate, because that's what our province is becoming. We're a bunch of sound bites, and the people just run along and listen to those. We need to look at the facts. We need to ensure that we're not just doing horse racing for partisan reasons.

We're told that there are splits in the caucus and that's why some wanted to vote for this budget and some didn't, in the third party. That's for them to choose. They all need to make that decision. As I said earlier, at least they're not sitting on their hands. They've stepped up and said yes—100% of them stood in here the other day and said, "We will support this budget. We will reward that Liberal government for all of their misdeeds. Sorry you're not going to get the eye care you need, sorry that you're not going to get the dental exams that you need, sorry you're not going to get the hospital that you've been promised"—like, as I say, in Markdale we were, 12 years ago. There's \$12 million sitting in the bank ready for that hospital, which has been fundraised by the community.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Markdale deserves their hospital.

Mr. Bill Walker: Markdale definitely deserves their hospital, absolutely, and it should have been a priority regardless of whether I happen to be a Conservative from that riding. It should have been done because the people there deserve it, and that will not happen because this government has overspent. It's unfortunate that people in this House will actually look for partisan reasons to support that type of misdeed and misbehaviour. It's mismanagement extraordinaire. I can't believe that people would actually stand up and applaud that and have a party for it, and I can't believe the party on the opposite side when they stand up to defend this budget, this supposedly prosperous and fair Ontario.

Prosperous? I'm not certain how you could ever spin an \$11.9-billion deficit as a prosperous province. I'm not certain how a \$411-billion projected debt, which we will pay for the next 50 years—if we can even get to that point—is a prosperous Ontario. And a fair Ontario? Every turn of the coin, rural Ontario gets hammered. Rural Ontario has things taken away from them or they don't get their fair share of the gas tax, which they've been promised.

At the end of the day, there's continual legislation when you don't even, in regard to the Green Energy Act, allow a local municipality to have their say on something that's going to impact their background. They need to ensure that there is actual democracy happening. The government of the day should have rescinded that like we've asked and given local democracy back to the people who are elected locally. That's one thing that we'll continually fight for.

I can't fathom that anybody in this House, regardless of political stripe, would not believe in fair democracy and would ever, ever reward a party that has mismanaged our economy so badly and run us down the deficit track that they're going full steam ahead at. Now what we have—and today I think the member from High Park made a reference to "Andrea Horwath is leading and Premier Kathleen Wynne is following." That was a new revelation today, so there must be another little backroom deal that just hasn't made it quite public, although that's a little bit public here in the House, but sometimes things get said in the House that aren't supposed to get out of here.

We need to understand who is really leading this new coalition government, because at the end of the day, I think we know where this vote is going to go. We're going to have the NDP prop up those corrupt Liberals that are terrible and shameful and horrible in the morning, but in the afternoon vote, I think they're probably going to stand in unison, 100% of them, in fact, although there might be someone who actually stands up and does the right thing and votes against that budget because they know in their heart of hearts it's not the right budget to turn this province around, it's not the budget that's going to make sure that those pages sitting in front of you and the rest of the kids out there who are looking for a province that they can be proud of and that they have hope in—they know that we have to make decisions. They're going to be difficult decisions, absolutely—there's no doubting that—and there are going to have to be changes, but you cannot be corrupt and prop them up and stand in front of your constituents and look them in the eye and say, "I did the right thing." You have to stand on principle. You have to say, "We're going down the wrong track." We're going down the debt-and-deficit-reduction track, and now we have two people in the front of the train. We're just not sure who's driving—whether it's Andrea or Kathleen Wynne.

We need to ensure that at the end of the day, we're going to—we're going to stand here and do what's right for the people of Ontario. We're going to stand on principle and we're going to say that there is a better way. We want to give hope to our youth. We want to ensure that there is trust in government.

Why is there so much apathy out there? There's so much apathy because these types of things happen. You can waste \$900 million on a gas plant. A very, very defined discussion was had by the Liberals and they said, "Yes, we're still going forward." They've hid documents. Now we hear that they've even deleted very crucial

documents so we can never perhaps get to the bottom of this.

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How do we ever have trust in the government that will do that and stand here and want us to applaud them and give them another chance? We need hope. We need trust. We need confidence. The people need to have confidence in the government that's leading them. We need truth. The truth will come out. But, most importantly, we need a government that when people get up in the morning they say, "Yes, they have our backs. They are leading us down the right path. This is where I want to go. I'll step up and I'll do my part to follow and play that role to make sure."

There is absolutely a better way. We are prepared to stand here and hold that government to account. We will not support this budget which is going down those deficit tracks. There is a better way. The PCs are proud to stand here on behalf of their constituents and ensure that at the end of the day, that there is a change of government at some point. Maybe the NDP, at some point, will surprise us and could have that change. We'll give the people of Ontario, who rightfully deserve the ability to say yes or no to a government, whether they have the faith and the trust. The people need to elect the Premier. The people need to elect the government.

We cannot support this budget. It is just nothing more than more of the same from the Dalton McGuinty and the Kathleen Wynne government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege, for a couple of minutes, to follow the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I think for the viewer it's important to put things in context. We're really debating the budget, Bill 65. What has happened here is there really is a substantive motion. A substantive motion basically is a coalition agreement between the NDP and the Liberal government. Now really, in fact, what that motion is—it's really a time allocation motion, which means limiting debate on the bill that we wish and think is the most important thing that the province does, which is the budget.

As the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and our leader, Tim Hudak, said, we've looked at it. We've read the budget. We've looked at the state of the economy of Ontario, and we decided they're on the wrong track.

I think it's important to put on the record, in the very few minutes I have, some of the context of this bill. It says that the deadline for accepting amendments by the committee of written public submissions on the bill shall be at 6 p.m. What I say by time allocation: "The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration ... for one day that is two calendar days after the committee meets for public hearings ... from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. If the second calendar day after public hearings falls on a weekend," clause-by-clause shall be considered on a Monday.

So it really specifically allocates every minute of time. At the end of the day there's a required vote on the 6th of June. Then, any motions or discussion after that—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's what it says in the motion, if you drafted it.

Here's the issue: This is, by any other name, a time allocation motion. It's an admission in a public forum that the NDP and the Liberals are united. What they're really doing here is—it says, "No other motion to revise the parliamentary calendar shall be moved before September 9, 2013...." And then the other amendments that are moved after the 6th will have no bearing.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can see that the House leader for the NDP—he's speaking up over here. But what he's saying is that he's not admitting that the NDP are part of a time allocation motion on a budget.

That's the first time in my 18 years that the voice of the people of Ontario is being ignored, and it is because of the government working in co-operation with the NDP to hoodwink the people of Ontario.

Here's the real evidence: As part of the election, the Auditor General issued a report. In that report he made it very clear that without substantive change in spending they cannot possibly balance the budget. We have the Auditor General's report from April 2013 ultimately saying that the scandalous waste of money at the gas plant is another example that this government cannot manage major projects, or for that matter any projects. In fact, we have the whole reform of Ontario's public service issued at the very beginning of this government's mandate—163 recommendations, all of which said they have to set a new course.

Our government, our leader, our finance critic and others have made it very clear that we can in no way sit, anybody in this House, and support the budget. That's really what this says—without substantive change. They're increasing spending. They're increasing the debt. They're increasing the deficit, and they're shedding on the taxes into the future for our young people. Anybody of conscious thinking and looking at this critically—it's easy to say, "Kumbaya, working together," but the real truth is, we're on the wrong path and the people of Ontario are going to pay.

What about the people with no jobs?

The promises made on auto insurance—a 15% cut—are patently false. What's the delivery? What's the timeline? What are the accountability mechanisms?

There is nothing in this particular—even the substantive amendment, when I look through it, it talks about having a budget officer. We have an Auditor General of this province who's very capable and competent to address the lack of accountability. They want to add another level of bureaucracy to distance them from the government so they can blame someone else. They're the government. We're in trouble. You ask yourself, who caused the trouble? They caused it themselves over the last decade by spending beyond their means.

If you look at the response to the transit challenge, their response is to increase taxes by about \$1,000 a family. Our response is to quit the scandalous spending and waste.

I suspect the NDP are in agreement, really, with the government on the spending of about \$1,000 more in taxes per family. They're agreeing with them. They're voting for this. They know full well that's the agenda.

If the NDP had any courage at all, they would stand with us, and this government would be made to be more accountable. That's what I'm saying. That's what should be done. That's what I want the people of Ontario to know.

Today, we're actually debating the budget. The budget is being managed by a coalition agreement between the NDP and the Liberals. That agreement is time-allocating the amount of debate, and you, the taxpayers of Ontario, are going to pay. It'll probably be about \$100a person; for a family of five, it'll be no less than \$1,000. We had it in the media yesterday. The Auditor General has said it.

The cancellation of the gas plants: They said it's \$90 million, then \$240 million. I can tell you, it's probably a billion dollars, where you've paid the billion and you get nothing for it. That's the government we have in Ontario today—no accountability.

Even the apology by the Premier, in fairness, on TVOntario, Steve Paikin's show—she didn't say she was sorry for doing it. What she said was that she's sorry it happened. She should have said, "I'm sorry I broke the window," not "I'm sorry the window is broken." This is the deal. She should have said, "I'm sorry that we broke the system"—an admission of guilt—and then asked the Liberal Party of Ontario to pay for it. That's who should be paying for this. It's shameful.

There's not enough time to really make a conclusive argument, but the documents are here. The Auditor General has written two substantive reports. A third report—and this one is written by Don Drummond—163 recommendations. It's all in here. What he said was this: "Unless you reduce spending, you cannot balance the budget."

They are saying to me—

Hon. John Milloy: What about horse racing, John? What do they say about horse racing?

Mr. John O'Toole: The House leader for the Liberals is bringing up horse racing. There's a good example of a government promising one thing and doing something else.

I can tell you, there is more in this document that should be examined, and I think an election is the right place to examine the options for the future.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has at least had the courage to stand up for what he believes in, as opposed to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: John, flick him the finger.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, you can do what you wish, and you can speak the way you wish. I would only say this: You should tell the truth when you speak in this House. We'll leave the rest up to you.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't enough time to get into the real—the devil is in the detail of this budget. Perhaps I

could have the floor when this is next called. I would clarify that with the Speaker.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron—Bruce, Ms. Thompson, has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're here this afternoon, as you said, because I asked the Minister of Energy a question and he refused to answer. I respectfully asked, in the spirit of co-operation—which we hear about time and time again from the Premier in a minority government and how it's so important, time and time again, to work well with the folks that are trying to make a difference. But you know what? I'm really doubtful that my question will even be answered today. My question was this: Will this working group that we hear has been pulled together to study the whole issue around wind turbines include opposition members?

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But you know what? I don't understand why the minister and the Premier wouldn't think it useful or smart, right out of the gate, to include a couple of the opposition members. We're the ones that are fielding calls from our constituents about the turbines. We're the ones that are hearing from municipalities about the local issues, because they have no say in the siting of industrial wind turbines. I'm doubtful that the members from Brampton West, Brampton—Springdale, St. Catharines, Ottawa and Peterborough are getting calls from their constituents about industrial wind turbines, but we are.

The Premier said yesterday morning in question period that she wanted to work "in collaboration with the opposition." And at this point, I really have to wonder if the Premier means only to the party left of me. They only want to work with anyone to the left side of this line.

The truth is, the facts are mounting. Plain and simple, the FIT program is unaffordable. It was ill-advised, ill-conceived and not costed out, and it has caused everyone to lose confidence in Ontario's energy policy. Further to that, WTO has actually ruled against it. And just today, in the news, we're realizing that finally, this Liberal government is atoning for this waste of policy that has just absolutely polluted the countryside with industrial wind turbines, because they're having to change provisions within their act to go in compliance with the ruling from WTO—finally. You know what? if they

listened to the people that are involved, maybe there could have been a difference here.

We're not the only ones telling this Liberal government that they've got it wrong. Don Drummond did, the Auditor General did, and just last month, the Fraser report told you that planned expansion of wind energy under the GEA is not cost-efficient and will, if pursued, raise costs to provincial households possibly another 40% to 60%.

You know, just moments ago, we heard debate from the third party referencing the plight of the impoverished people in Ontario. Well, guess what? If we don't get this right, if the Liberal government doesn't get the right people to the table to make a difference, they're going to be facing those poor people with even higher electricity bills, and it's going to really cause more strife across this province. People are just not getting it, but we in the opposition party do get it, and we do want to make a difference.

It's interesting: The minister is planning on making an announcement tomorrow on the municipality's role in the siting of renewable energy projects. I wonder if the parliamentary assistant today is going to give us a sneak peek as to what that announcement is going to be. But I doubt it, as his party only seems to take advice from one opposition party in this Legislature, and that's on the left side.

I've been hearing from people and municipalities who are getting hung out to dry by this government. For example, they are investing in solar projects, yet their contracts are not getting approved by the OPA, with no explanation.

I also understand that there are no new FIT contracts being accepted either. Could this be that Liberals have finally come to terms with the fact that they have made a mess of this energy file and they now realize the FIT program is a disaster?

I can assure this House, Speaker, that I will be watching tomorrow's announcement very, very carefully, and I will continue to ensure that I will work for municipalities who have asked for their planning power back. I am proud to represent the municipalities that are trying to make a difference, and I will stand by them.

We have the municipality of Bluewater in Durham county, which has been approached by three different wind companies in opposition to their permit fees. They're going to go to court. This is money that could have been spent on local issues—on hospitals—in their municipality, where it makes a difference. But instead, they're going to be fighting wind companies because of this Green Energy Act.

Speaker, there are grave concerns. I have to ask: Will this government stop their charade and invite the opposition to join them at the table so a real difference can be made going forward? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, has five minutes.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer the question on behalf of

the Minister of Energy and address the concerns raised by the member from Huron–Bruce in regard to the siting of renewable energy projects.

I think, first, it's important to recognize why our investments in green energy are so important. Ontario has created more than 31,000 jobs and attracted billions of dollars of investment with our clean energy policies. Our province's commitment to developing clean energy sources has allowed us to stop relying on dirty, coal-fired electricity generation, which allows us to reduce Ontario's carbon footprint, but it also makes our air cleaner, it protects the health of Ontarians everywhere and it helps us to reduce our health care costs. I think it's also important to acknowledge there are almost 20 municipalities currently building feed-in tariff projects, including Brockville, Kitchener, Lambton Shores, Markham, Waterloo and Welland.

This being said, I understand the concerns being raised by the member from Huron–Bruce. Respecting local decision-making and preserving the health of our communities, particularly in rural Ontario, has always been a top priority for both the Premier and the Minister of Energy. In fact, the province has already made several changes to the feed-in tariff program in order to ensure municipal concerns are better heard and better addressed.

Under the new feed-in tariff rules, there is a new point system, which includes points for the amount of support they receive from the community and from aboriginal groups. Making community support one of the key criteria for whether or not a project gets approved is a significant step forward. Moreover, the current renewable energy approvals process, which is run through the Ministry of the Environment, makes it mandatory for municipalities to be consulted on the approval of a given project. Those applying for a feed-in tariff project must not only document those concerns but they have to indicate how they will address the issues and the concerns that the municipality has raised. If they do not do this, the renewable energy approval process does not proceed. While the changes have been substantial steps forward, the system is not perfect, and the province is taking steps to make necessary adjustments so we can better address local concerns.

As the member from Huron–Bruce pointed out, the Ministry of Energy is working with the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Environment and Rural Affairs on this issue to make sure that the concerns of municipalities, particularly rural municipalities, are better heard, better understood and better addressed. That's what's important: improving the process for siting energy projects in Ontario.

The Minister of Energy has also asked the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator to develop a process to create regional energy plans that will include formal input from municipalities, communities, the public and the energy sector. The minister has also asked the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator to take into account any recommendations on the siting of energy

infrastructure that come out of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Members of the committee will have an opportunity to give suggestions and improve upfront decision-making to ensure the province gets energy siting right the first time. I hope opposition members take this opportunity for providing input seriously, which I hope addresses the question the member put earlier.

Speaker, our province understands how important investing in clean energy is. We also know we need to address municipal concerns if we want to continue growing the clean energy sector. The opposition has their

view of how we should do that, and they will have the opportunity to weigh in on the matter through the committee process. Ultimately, the best way to ensure that local concerns are heard and addressed is by consulting directly with municipalities, and that is exactly what our government, our ministries and our agencies in Ontario are doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. This House now stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1809.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Oakville Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Harris, Michael (PC) Hillier, Randy (PC)	Oxford Kitchener–Conestoga Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC) Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Barrie Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora York Centre / York-Centre Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC) Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB) MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Cambridge Brant Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP) Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin Trinity–Spadina London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McDonnell, Jim (PC) McGuinty, Dalton (LIB) McKenna, Jane (PC) McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud Burlington Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC) McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor-Tecumseh	

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Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
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Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
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Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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